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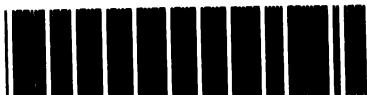
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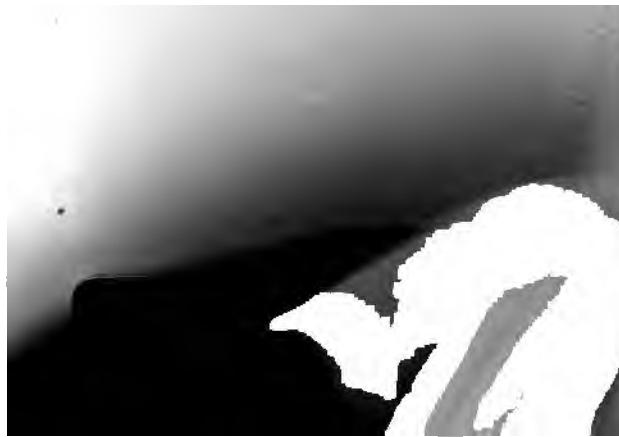




THEOBALD;
OR,
THE TRIUMPH OF CHARITY.



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THEOBALD;
OR,
THE TRIUMPH OF CHARITY.

LONDON:
COX AND WYMAN, PRINTERS, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
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THEOBALD;

OR,

THE TRIUMPH OF CHARITY.

A Corsican Story.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY A LADY.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following tale, written by Madame la Comtesse de la Rochère, forms part of a series of interesting works, moral, instructive, and amusing, which have been recently published under the auspices of the Archbishop of Tours. The object of this tale is so excellent, and it so faithfully pourtrays Corsican life, scenery, and manners, that a translation may not be unacceptable to the English reader.

“ It may be affirmed, without exaggeration,” is the remark of a recent writer,* “ that till lately, Corsica was less known in England than New Zealand. The general impression concerning it was tolerably correct. Imagination painted it as a wild and romantic country—romantic in its scenery and the character of its inhabitants ; a very region of romance and sentiment ; a fine field for the novelist and dramatist ; and to that class of writers it was abandoned.”

* See “ Rambles in Corsica and Sardinia,” by Thomas Forester (Longman & Co. 1858.) ; and “ Corsica,” translated from the German of Frederick Gregorovius (London and Edinburgh).

In common with most such works of fiction, the system of *Vendetta*, or blood-revenge, forms the groundwork of the present tale. The main characteristics of this savage system are unfolded in the course of the story, and it is unnecessary to dwell on them here. For many centuries the *Vendetta*, with its accompaniment, *banditisme*, has been the scourge of the island. Philippini, the best Corsican historian, who lived in the sixteenth century, states that in his time 28,000 Corsicans were murdered in the course of thirty years. A later historian calculated that between the years 1683 and 1715, a period of thirty-two years, 28,715 murders were perpetrated in Corsica, and he reckons that an equal number were wounded. What do we find in more recent times? In a still more civilized age, when Corsica having become a French department the laws were justly administered, under a powerful and regular government, it might have been supposed that life and property were duly protected. But we learn, from official records, that between the years 1821 and 1850, no less than 4,300 *assassinats* were perpetrated in Corsica.

Well might the *Prefét* observe, in his address at the opening of the Council General in 1857:—
“*La situation du département à cet égard est, sans doute, profondément triste. Le nombre des crimes*

n'a pas diminué sensiblement." The successive governments of France appear to have been too much occupied by their own affairs to pay any regard to the social state of their Corsican department, flagrant as was the disgrace it reflected on them. Perhaps they were impressed with the idea that the passion of revenge, the thirst for blood, was so inherent in the native character, that law and force were alike powerless, and the *Vendetta* could only be extirpated by a moral change, more to be hoped for than expected. Thus speaks M. le Prefêt, in the inaugural address before referred to : "*Ici, messieurs, vous en conviendrez, l'administration est sans force. C'est à la religion seule qu'appartient la touchante prérogative de prêcher l'oublé des injures.*"

The story of "Theobald," which echoes this pious sentiment, was composed at a time when such fearful outrages were still rife in Corsica. With the same theme as other tales founded on the *Vendetta*, it differs from most of them in its *dénouement*, which, under circumstances of severe trial, exhibits the "Triumph of Charity" in the large and theological sense of the term. In this point only Mme. de la Rochère's work fails of being a faithful representation of Corsican life as it existed when she wrote: at least, such instances were rare in its annals. But the fiction

was a worthy contribution to a righteous cause, conveyed in a form that can hardly fail of being generally interesting. "There is, probably, no other means," observes M. Gregorovius, "of putting down the blood-revenge, murder, and bandit-life, than culture;—and culture advances in Corsica but slowly."

It might have been long, indeed, before the influence of "preaching," of "moral culture," with that of the press, could succeed in eradicating evils so deeply rooted in the genius of the people. In such an extreme case, the exercise of a despotic power was required to put an end to the reign of terror and blood which had desolated the fair island for so many centuries; and one bold stroke broke the spell. The very year after utterance was given to words despairing of redress except by the slow process of moral culture, an imperial decree was issued for disarming the entire population, combined with further measures for increasing the force of the *gendarmerie*, and making it highly penal to harbour the bandits, or afford them any succour. These combined operations, actively and rigorously carried out, were completely successful. To the extraordinary man who now fills the throne of France is due the merit of conferring on the country which was the cradle of his race this most

signal benefit, which Napoleon I. either did not care, or could not venture, to achieve.

In one year (1853) four hundred of the outlaws and brigands were either sentenced or shot down, and as many more were driven out of the island. The life of a citizen is now as safe in Corsica as in any other department of France ; and no future "Theobald" will have to undergo such agonising struggles as are described in the following pages between the imperious dictates of a false and sanguinary code of honour and the benign principles of the Christian faith.

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ERRATA

Page 21, *for Venetian, and Venetian.*
22, " *Critica, and Critica.*
25, " *cambrine, and carnine.*
28, " *Macchia, and Macchia.*
118, " *Caporella, and Caporel.*
114, " *limberance, and limberance.*
115, " *zane who, real zane.*
121, " *virginal, and virgin.*
129, " *Piavela, and Piavela.*
138, *after St. Paul's, and Episcia.*
177, *for Cecilia, and Cecilia natio.*
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182, " *barbarous, and barbarous.*
" " *esuberant, and spright libant.*
127, " *Tecia, and Tecia.*
139, " *Dici.*

Some Notes illustrative of the Text, having been compiled
since the Work was printed, are added at the end, with refer-
ences to the pages to which they relate.

THEOBALD;

OR,

THE TRIUMPH OF CHARITY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE LADIES OF CHARITY.

OH, Charity ! Daughter of Heaven ! how ingenious art thou in creating resources to insure remedies for every ill—consolations for every misfortune. With holy flame thou leadest so many thousands of young and virtuous women to consecrate their lives to the relief of the sick, not only in hospitals, but in prisons, and even in the galleys ; moreover, from thee hath arisen the creation of the admirable associations of “St. Vincent de Paul,” of the “Ladies of Providence,” and so many other beneficent institutions of the same kind, which shower benefits of all sorts on the poor ; giving to some, necessary food, to others, clothing,—to all, assistance and good advice.

I was intimately acquainted with a lady who had been for a long time one of the visiting members of an excellent society, “The Ladies of Charity.” Calling upon her one day, at an early hour, when visitors were not expected, I found her seated at a table, noting in a register the list

of articles she had been charged to distribute during the current month.

"What!" cried I, "do you require so large a folio for your accounts?"

"Oh, no," replied my friend; "it is not larger than actually necessary."

"What more, then, does this great book contain?"

"Some notes and memoranda, without order or much importance."

"Let me see," said I, seizing upon the voluminous record.

"You will understand nothing, I assure you," said Eliza.

"I care not; allow me to judge for myself."

I opened it, and read at hazard some passages of the following description:—

"Christine, mother of five children; her husband blind: to find employment for her, and situations for her two daughters."

"Françoise, just confined. Mem.—To send her soup and place her infant at nurse, she being incapable of nursing it."

"In truth," said I, "all this must give you an infinity of trouble and take much time."

"No doubt it does," replied my friend; "but could my time be better employed?"

"Still," I argued, "there are social duties we ought to perform, besides those we owe to our families, even if a widow, without children, or one gifted with the wonderful activity I have so often admired in you."

"Believe me," said she, interrupting me and pressing my hand affectionately, "in whatever position we may be placed, if we only abridge our pernicious conversation, curtail our useless visits

and dangerous pleasures, many hours will remain each week that we could consecrate to good works ; and, as to the trouble of which you speak, I assure you the true enjoyment we feel in doing a little good repays us an hundredfold for any privation we may have been obliged to impose upon ourselves. I have lived in the world and known its pleasures ; but be assured, my dear friend, the most delightful ball, the most splendid *fête* does not afford us half the real joy arising from the smile of an infant whom we found in tears, or the grateful thanks of an aged man to whom we have afforded relief."

While Eliza pronounced these words with all the warmth of profound conviction, I continued turning over the leaves of her register and found the following memorandum :—

"Pierre Ferraud, nearly a hundred years old, and covered with wounds, living in a wretched loft, with no light but that proceeding from a door leading into the passage. It is urgent to remove this poor man immediately to a more wholesome lodging, his great age and infirmities rendering him incapable of exertion."

"And you actually visit these people yourself?"

"Certainly," replied Eliza, "in order to distribute our charity worthily, and according to the necessities of each person ; also, for the purpose of inspiring, as far as we can, pious and holy thoughts, which alone can afford lasting consolation."

"But these wounds and all this misery must be very repulsive," I urged, "and these infected lofts very disgusting ; besides, in leaving them, you must feel very melancholy."

"Melancholy, indeed, sometimes," said my

friend, "when our means are inadequate to relieve the sufferers; but, as to disgust or nausea, they wear off after the first few days; and for our own happiness—for that love of comfort so dear to us all—there is certainly much to be gained in visiting the wretched."

"How do you explain this?" I asked, in much surprise.

"Hear me," replied my friend. "When I visit the rich in their splendid hotels, when I admire their magnificent pier-glasses in rich gilded frames, their superb silken hangings, and examine with a curious eye those elegant and costly trifles that now ornament every console, and cover almost every table, and the thousand little *chefs-d'œuvre* of art that fill every *étagère*, without experiencing any feeling of envy (of which I am happily incapable), still I find the contrast great when I return home to my modest apartments, with the old-fashioned furniture; but, on the other hand, when I go home from my weekly visits to the poor in my district, I find everything of wonderful magnificence. My muslin curtains—my arm-chairs, covered with Utrecht velvet—my clock, of a somewhat gothic design—in fact, everything that surrounds me appears quite splendid. I feel almost ashamed of the luxury of my dress and furniture, and thank the Almighty for having been so bountiful to me, praying Him to succour those who are in want of the necessities of life."

"I now perfectly understand your feelings," said I; "but do you not often assist those who are ungrateful, and find your good works decried by the very people who have most benefited by them?"

"That is, indeed, sometimes the case," said she;

“for some of the poor are very exacting ; and when we are unable to give all they desire, they murmur and complain without cause. But we remember that it is Jesus Christ we assist in the persons of the poor, and that if we do not meet our recompense on earth, we shall not fail to receive it in heaven.”

She continued to make other observations, which I understood imperfectly, my attention being suddenly arrested by the following annotation :—

Mem : “This day I went with the baroness to Brando. Found a stranger with three children in a stable.”

Here followed some illegible words, and lower down,—

“I must immediately find a nurse for the new-born infant, make arrangements for the funeral, and institute every inquiry in order to discover the family to which the deceased lady belonged.”

“This is a singular memorandum,” said I, pointing it out to my friend.

“Ah,” said she, “it was written at Bastia, and recalls to my mind a terrible as well as touching event—a Corsican tragedy, the whole history of a *vendetta*, in short.”

“The history of a Corsican *vendetta* ! Oh, oblige me by relating it, my dear friend.”

“With pleasure ; for it appears to me very capable of inspiring good feelings, and proving the incalculable and lasting advantage of a religious education, while it makes us acquainted with the customs and manners of a very interesting country for many reasons, and one little visited by modern tourists. I shall therefore enlarge on many circumstances which I might

otherwise abridge in this tale. The first part what I am going to relate took place in my presence, and the rest I know to be positively true.

Eliza then took from a drawer a large piece woollen knitting, which I saw was intended a warm waistcoat for one of her poor. I also took out my embroidery, and she commenced the following narrative, to which I listened with the greatest attention, for, in addition to its interest nothing could surpass my friend's charming manner of telling a story.

PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORPHANS.

I HAD been but a short time at Bastia, when Madame la Baronne de D—, that model of virtue, of whom I have so often spoken to you, determined to establish a society of ladies for the purpose of relieving the poor, both in their moral and physical sufferings, with the endeavour, as far as possible, to eradicate the greatest cause of their misery—indolence, that great curse of the Corsican population. For this desirable end they would offer work to all whom age and illness did not incapacitate, and use every means in their power to induce and persuade them to accept it ; for we must admit, however high the promises of payment, this was by far the most difficult part of our task. The establishment of such a society in a country like Corsica could not fail to meet with many and serious obstacles ; but the sincere and lively charity of the baroness surmounted them all, and from the very first month our association numbered no less than sixty members. About half were ladies residing on the island, the rest were subscribers in France ; and all were presided

over by the excellent *curé* of the parish. The first funds were produced by a lottery, drawn in the *salon* of Madame D—. The town was then divided into six districts, and twelve ladies were chosen and appointed as visitors to the poor in their houses. I was one of the visiting ladies. Every month we all met, and, after attending high mass, we each gave an account to the society of what we had done, whom we had relieved, and the amount of our expenditure. My companion in this charitable undertaking was a venerable widow, who, following the affecting custom of Corsica, had never quitted her mourning garments, or appeared in any worldly assembly, since the death of her husband, which occurred thirty years before. One day, as we were returning from our daily visits, on arriving on the square of St. Nicholas, a young girl about fifteen years of age, tall and graceful as all women of this country are, approached my companion, the Signora Petrucci, and spoke to her in the Corsican dialect. I advanced a few steps to avoid hearing their conversation, but the widow joined me immediately.

"Good heavens," said she, translating in bad French what the young girl had told her; "a poor woman, whose husband has been assassinated, is dying of want with her children, in a stable on the road to Brando, a little before you reach La Madonna-della-Vesina. It is feared they cannot live long."

"Let us hasten to their assistance," said I, going forward.

"It is much too far for me," replied the signora, arresting me by my arm. She was not young; and, accustomed from childhood to the idle, quiet life of the ladies of Bastia, was incapable of long

walks or much exertion. "Besides, what should we do at Vesina? The poor of the town are already more numerous than we can assist; besides, this woman is a stranger, a Genoese (or native of Genoa), without doubt." And she laid an emphasis on the word, showing all the contempt and hate which is felt by the Corsicans for that nation, under whose iron yoke they suffered so long.

"As you say she is dying, what does it matter whether a stranger or not? But you are right; we cannot appropriate to the use of this unfortunate woman those funds that have been given to us for the poor of the parish of St. Nicholas. I will, therefore, go and consult the baroness."

"A very good idea," interrupted the widow; "present my humble respects to her. We are very fortunate in having her in the island, she does so much good! Adieu, then, my dear friend," added the signora, giving me her hand. "I am going to take my siesta, for I am greatly fatigued."

I crossed the square as quickly as possible. At that hour it was deserted, and taking the street between the barracks and the sea, arrived by the garden at the glass-door of a gallery, which the lady's maid opened immediately; and without giving her time to announce me, knocked gently at the door of Madame D---'s apartment.

"Come in," said she, in a sweet voice. She was seated before a work-table, adjusting, with infinite patience, a multitude of small pieces of cotton, which she converted into caps and other articles, for the poor little children of Bastia. This was her favourite occupation; she was working with all the ardour of a person obliged to gain her daily bread by the amount of her work. Madame D---

was no longer in the flower of youth, but her features were delicate and aristocratic, her eyes full of soft expression, her figure elegant and majestic, her step dignified and graceful at the same time, and all these physical advantages gave but a faint idea of the beauty of her mind, or the goodness of her heart. I briefly related the object of my early visit.

“We must assist this poor woman,” said she, instantly pushing away her work-table, and ringing the bell. “Bring round the carriage immediately,” said she to the servant who appeared.

“My dear Eliza, will you kindly accompany me, that is, if your children can spare you for a few hours, and your husband will not be annoyed at your absence?” for her enlightened and sincere piety would not permit her to advise even a good action, at the expense of a duty.

“I have nothing that retains me at this time,” I replied, “and shall be most happy.”

“At all events, I will send to mention the cause of your absence at home,” said the baroness, while she hastily equipped herself in a simple costume; for no woman attached less importance to dress than she did; then opening a large closet, she took out a parcel of linen and children’s clothing.

“This may be useful to us,” said she. The horses were soon harnessed, and we drove off. It was one of those enervating and overwhelming days in which even animals appear to lose their energy under the baneful effects of the sirocco; so we advanced but slowly. In the street, and on the market-place, a crowd of idle people were in a state of complete inactivity, the greater part sleeping listlessly, extended in the shade, under the walls.

"Is it not necessary," asked Madame D——, "to use all our influence to inspire these people with the love of work? A great many of them beg their bread, when they might gain it so easily; but it is not their fault," added she, "they know no better. It is our duty to teach them."

One of the distinguishing traits of this excellent woman was her perfect charity—that while blaming a vice she always found some excuse for the culprit. We took the high road to Pietranera, by the sea-shore, at times approaching so near that the waves bathed the edge of the road; at others, passing through groves of olive-trees, intermixed with groups of pomegranates and myrtles.

"Go faster, Pierre," cried the baroness, to the coachman. "When I think of the distress of this unfortunate woman, I cannot be satisfied with our slow pace," added she, to me.

I shared her impatience. A most magnificent scene now presented itself to our view; the sea, tempestuous and blown furiously towards the land by the sirocco, contrasted with the smiling verdure of the hills to our left; but I was well acquainted with the beauty of this landscape, for the road to Brando, wide and even as the finest road in France, picturesque as the most beautiful park, was my favourite and constant walk. Now the fate of the stranger interested me too keenly to admit of my remarking the beauties that surrounded me.

"Here we are, at last, at the Rotunda of the Templars!" cried I, on perceiving the pretty pavilion, and the hanging terrace above the sea, that is said to have belonged at one time to this celebrated order. A few meagre, wild-looking

sheep, with black, coarse hair, rather than wool, grazed upon the aromatic herbs which is all now to be found on the ancient domain of the knights. Their shepherd, extended under an aged olive-tree, was singing in a monotonous tone one of those interminable laments, which reckon not less than from sixty to eighty verses in length.

“Perhaps the shepherd could direct us to the place where this unhappy family is to be found,” I remarked to the baroness. She stopped the carriage, and questioned the man herself.

“They are down there, in the hovel, just before you enter the village,” he replied. “There is blood in that affair. I have seen the woman,—are you a relation? You will arrive much sooner by leaving your carriage, and taking the path to the left. Will you allow me to show you the way?” Gladly accepting his offer, we left the carriage; he placed his gun on his shoulder, and walked before us, without heeding his flock, which he left to the care of his dog. We had some trouble in following him on the hill, through the heath and briars, but in ten minutes we arrived at a miserable half-ruined cottage. A most heart-rending sight then presented itself to our view; on a heap of straw, and in a stable open to all the inclemencies of the weather, a poor woman had just brought an infant into the world, a weak little creature who was feebly crying in the apron of an old woman, evidently the owner of the miserable hovel. At her side a girl about ten years of age, half concealed by the straw, was shaking under an attack of intermittent ague; a youth, about thirteen years old, was on his knees, close to his mother, contemplating her in mute astonishment and horror. The poor woman

was so pale, we should have thought her already dead, but for the sound of her hoarse breathing, which came with much effort.

“ May God bless you for bringing the ladies here,” said the old woman to the shepherd, “ for I have not even an old sheet in which I can wrap this poor little innocent.”

I took the parcel of linen from the servant, and began dressing the infant. The baroness approached the mother.

“ How do you feel ? ” asked she in Italian. The stranger opened her eyes, and closed them immediately, crying, “ Antonio! oh, my Antonio!”

“ Rest assured, mother, he shall be avenged,” murmured the young Corsican, pressing the already cold hand he held in his. These words made me shudder. I looked at the boy ; his features were regular, and their expression amiable, with nothing in his appearance that denoted ferocity.

“ This poor woman is very ill,” said the baroness to me in a low voice.

“ Send for the medical man,” I suggested.

“ And the Abbé Durand,” added she to the servant, who immediately left to execute these commissions. Then she requested the shepherd to fetch some strong soup from the nearest inn. During their absence we borrowed the paillasse and pillow that formed the old woman’s only bed, and placed the sick mother upon it. She was a person apparently about thirty years of age, with a most pleasing and interesting countenance ; her long fair hair fell in disorder on her shoulders. Everything in her costume presented the greatest contrast ; her dress, which was soiled and torn in every direction, was composed of very handsome

gros-de-Naples silk ; her thin summer boots were burst, and allowed her poor bruised feet to be seen, and the finest thread stockings ; part of a shawl of the brightest colours was draped around her, but this remnant was that of a splendid real Cashmere. Who was this person, apparently a stranger in the country ? The state in which we found her, forbade *our* interrogations. The shepherd soon returned. The soup he brought appeared to revive the poor invalid, who thanked *us* by a soft and grateful look. We showed her the newly-born infant.

“Poor child,” she cried, embracing it tenderly. “Never will it know its father !” The poor woman then shed a torrent of tears.

“I will be its father, and Clarita’s father also,” said her son, in a grave tone, which did not appear natural at his age.

“Theobald, my beloved son,” said the poor mother. She drew him to her, and kissed his forehead, then shuddering convulsively,—

“They will murder you also,” cried she. “Oh, let us go, let us depart instantly, let us return to my beloved Touraine ; there at least we shall be safe from the balls of an assassin ! But he ! He never can return ! I shall never see him again !” and her tears flowed afresh. Neither the baroness nor I could restrain our tears.

“Poor lady,” said I, at length, “in heaven alone you will rejoin him whose loss you so much lament.”

“Ah ! Yes, that is my only hope.”

Then, after a moment’s silence, pointing to the children whom we had grouped round her couch, as the only consolation that remained to her on earth,—

“ But they—what will become of them ? for I feel that I am dying, I know I cannot live ! ”

“ Do not talk thus, dear mother,” said the little girl, shivering in every limb ; “ we are already sufficiently miserable ! ”

“ Oh ! why have I not still my relations ? ” pursued the sick woman ; “ they would take care of my orphans ; for if they remain here, they will die like their father.

“ Listen, my son, my dear Theobald,” added she, in a voice that became weaker every moment. “ You must be educated on the continent, your father, you know, had consented to it. Now, mark well what I say : remain there all your life, never put your foot on this fatal island. With a profession you can live anywhere, and you neither want courage nor activity. Some day when your sisters have lost their great-grandmother, send for them ; they will be far happier with you in France, for my country is so beautiful ! ”

At this moment the Abbé Durand and the doctor entered the stable, the latter felt the pulse of the sick woman, and made an expressive gesture which we understood only too well.

“ Can madame be removed to my house ? ” asked the baroness.

“ Impossible,” replied the medical man, in a low voice, “ for she cannot live two hours.”

We looked at each other sorrowfully ; the unhappy fate of this young and interesting woman greatly affected us.

The priest, who was French like ourselves, now approached.

“ Madame,” said he, “ of whatever nature your sufferings may be, the aid of religion will soften them.”

She looked at him with resignation, for she fully understood him.

“ It must be the Almighty who sends you here, my father,” said she. “ I earnestly desire to make my confession.”

We retired into a sort of dog-kennel, that served the old woman for a sleeping apartment, taking with us the doctor and Clarita, who was in a dreadful state from ague ; as to Theobald, nothing we could say would induce him to leave ; he remained on his knees at the door. Not a tear fell from his eyes, but his mute and concentrated grief, and the wretched expression of his countenance, was, indeed, melancholy to behold. In a quarter of an hour, the good abbé called us ; Theobald was the first to approach his mother.

“ My daughter,” said the worthy ecclesiastic, “ repeat in the presence of your children, that you pardon your husband’s assassin.”

“ I forgive him,” said she, making an effort to raise her voice, and kissing the crucifix the abbé presented to her.

“ But I—never will I pardon my father’s murderer,” said Theobald, in so low a voice, that only I heard him. I again looked attentively at the youth, his childish features contrasted so strangely with his words, that I could scarcely believe they announced a lasting resolution.

The Abbé Durand had gone to fetch the holy sacrament, silence reigned in the hovel, the dying woman was praying in a low voice, her eyes were shut, and her whole appearance denoted pious resignation.

All at once the little infant uttered a weak cry on Margarita’s lap ; the mother raised herself up with more strength than we thought she pos-

sessed, and made a movement as if to open her dress, and nurse the child, but she fell back, overcome with the exertion.

“Ah! said she,” I shall not nurse that one; a stranger will give her nourishment. Who knows what care she will receive?”

She wept bitterly, then seeing the abbé arrive with the holy sacrament, she raised her eyes to heaven, saying,—

“O God, who art so merciful as to come to me, may Thy holy will be done! Be a father to my children, when I am gone!”

We all fell on our knees; she received the sacrament with the most edifying piety, embraced her children, thanked us for our care, and implored our prayers for the repose of her husband’s soul and her own; after which she fell into a peaceful slumber. Soon a cold perspiration appeared on her forehead, her breathing became oppressed, she pronounced once more the beloved name of Antonio, kissed the crucifix which she still held; then the rattle, that terrible forerunner of death, was heard. The abbé recited the prayers for the dying; we replied by our tears, and before he had finished, the spirit had fled from the body—her sufferings were over.

Theobald imagined at first that his mother had fallen asleep again. In an authoritative tone he imposed silence on his sister, who asked for something to drink; and placing his finger on his mouth, he made us a sign to be still.

The poor child’s mistake cut us to the heart; and when we made him comprehend the dreadful truth, he uttered a terrible cry, and throwing himself on the body of his mother, embraced her several times passionately, but the violence of his

grief caused him to faint. In this state, the servant took him in his arms, and placed him in the carriage ; burning wax-lights were put, one on each side of the couch of the deceased, and Margarita and the shepherd undertook to sit up with the corpse. I took the newly-born infant in my arms, the doctor carried the sick little girl, who cried most piteously. In this way we reached the carriage, in which, with the three children, we set off. The Abbé Durand and the doctor walked to town.

It was already night ; a ray of moonlight fell on the pallid countenance of Theobald, who, recovered from his fainting fit, remained in a dull stupor ; not one of us had courage to utter a single word till we reached Bastia. I lived in the square ; Madame D—— persuaded me to go home.

“ Your husband will be alarmed, and perhaps dissatisfied, by a longer absence,” said she ; “ to-morrow we can advise together as to what remains to be done.” I placed the infant in her arms, it slept peacefully, and I entered my house with a mind painfully occupied by the scene I had witnessed.

CHAPTER II.

THE CORSICANS.

THE following morning, I went early to the baroness ; the infant was on her lap, and she was giving it some drops of milk.

“ I thank you sincerely for your kind and ready assistance,” said she. “ Do you know of a good nurse at this time ? This child requires one immediately.”

“ I know just the person to suit you, a very poor, but honest young woman, who has just lost her own infant, and whose husband, a sailor, is absent on a long voyage, and will not return home for a year or two.”

“ That is fortunate, and will suit us exactly ; tell me where she is to be found, and I will immediately send to engage her. Last night, the Abbé Durand baptized this poor little creature, who is very weak ; the doctor assures me she was born prematurely.”

“ And Theobald, how is he to-day ? ”

“ My maid sat up with him ; he was in a high fever and delirious all night, but is better now. Would you like to see him ? ”

I accepted her offer willingly, for the poor orphan interested me much. We went to the room where he was in bed.

" Do you know me ? " said I , approaching him .
He made an affirmative sign , but said nothing ;
his forehead was burning , and his large black eyes
gleamed with fever .

" In his present state we cannot ask him any
questions , " said the baroness ; " and yet it would
be very desirable to know the name of his family
and the village they inhabit , as well as the place
where their father was murdered , so as to be able
to put justice on the track of the guilty parties . "

" His sister can perhaps give us these details , "
I suggested .

" You are right , " said Madame D—— , " let us
go to my dressing-room , where I have had a bed
placed for her . She has the ague , but fortunately
no wanderings ; the doctor has prescribed quinine
for her . "

The little girl told us she was named Clarita
Loncini . She was born at Piovela , where her
great-grandmother and aunt resided ; but she
could not enlighten us , as to the exact place where
her father was murdered . She only remembered it
was in the middle of the day , in a maquis (or
thicket) , where they were all reposing , and waiting
for the extreme heat to pass , in order to continue
their route . Clarita was asleep , when she was
suddenly roused by the piercing cries of her
mother , and beheld a dreadful sight ; her father
was extended on the grass , bathed in blood , her
mother was calling loudly to him , and imploring
him to answer her ; but , alas ! he was dead . The
sound of horses ' feet and a second report of fire-
arms was heard .

Madame Loncini rushed from the fatal spot ,
dragging her children with her ; they lost them-
selves in the wood , and walked the whole night ,

until they found the stable, where they rested, worn out with fatigue. Clarita shuddered while relating this terrible adventure ; we caressed her affectionately, and wept with her. She was a pretty little girl, notwithstanding her sickly appearance.

The nurse arrived, and after making our arrangements, we gave the infant into her charge. The baroness then wrote to the maire of Piovela, requesting him to inform the family of their double loss. A detachment of Corsican voltigeurs was sent from Bastia to search for the body of Antonio, and to arrest the murderer, if it was possible to find him. The story of the little girl made us imagine that it was a little above Furiani that the crime had been committed. We then gave directions about the funeral of the poor mother, and the Abbé Durand was kind enough to undertake the management, and to officiate. Next morning, after having attended the service, I quickly returned to the hotel of the baroness ; she was in the garden, where I joined her.

“Theobald is much better,” cried she, on perceiving me ; “he took a little soup last evening, and passed a very good night, sleeping calmly.”

“But have the voltigeurs made any discovery ?”

“They found a spot in the wood, saturated with blood, about four leagues from Bastia ; and have brought a horse and a valise, that Clarita has identified as having belonged to her father. As to the body it has not been found.”

“Perhaps Antonio may not be dead after all,” cried I ; “what happiness for his children, if their father still lived.”

The baroness shook her head. “We must not expect such good fortune,” said she, mournfully.

"At all events, not a word must be said to Theobald, for fear of giving him a false hope."

The weather was magnificent; we took a few turns round the large garden, entirely surrounded by a hedge of aloes, with long thorns. The air was balmy with the perfume of orange and citron trees, then in full flower. We stood on the terrace and looked at the sea, then so tranquil and transparent; on the calm surface, the fishermen's boats were gliding homeward. Nine o'clock now struck on the town clock, and at the same moment a steamboat shot rapidly before us, leaving a long track of foam on the waves, and a column of smoke in the air, both of which soon disappeared.

"Behold the image of happiness in this life," said Madame D——, to me.

"Or rather the image of its glories," I replied. At this moment we heard a stifled sigh close to us, and on turning, found it proceeded from Theobald, who had joined us.

"What is the matter, my dear child?" asked the baroness in her kindest manner.

"Ah! madame, is not that the steamboat that goes each week to France?"

"Yes, my child, does it interest you?"

"It was on that we had engaged our berths," said the poor boy; "and if misfortune had not fallen upon us, we should, at this moment, have been *all* on board. And my poor mother, who so longed for the day of departure!" He fell on his knees, and burst into tears; they were the first he had shed since the terrible catastrophe. We allowed them to flow, for we felt they would relieve him.

"My poor child," at length said Madame D——; "imitate your good mother's example,

her courage, and resignation. Pray to God fervently, He never abandons us when we invoke His aid with faith."

"And to think that three days later we should have been safe from their vengeance!" pursued Theobald, following the train of his thoughts.

"Did your father know he ran any danger?" we asked, making him sit on a garden bench.

"No," replied the youth. We thought we had nothing more to fear, as the Fabianos had left the island for the last seven years, and we had not heard they were likely to return."

"Who are the Fabianos?" I asked.

"The enemies of our family for more than a century. There is much blood between us; they have killed more than ten of our relations, but we have not been behind with them," added he, with fierce pride. "I was but six years' old when they besieged our house, and remember it as well as if it had been yesterday. I carried the cartouches to my father; my poor mother had fainted; but Annuciata fired the guns like a man. Ah! my aunt Annuciata is a woman of courage. Our house is well fortified, with bars of iron everywhere; however, when our shepherds came to our assistance, it was indeed time, for we were beginning to want ammunition."

"What customs! My God, what customs!" exclaimed the baroness.

Theobald looked at her in astonishment.

"You speak like my poor mother," said he; "she always blamed our habits, which she called barbarous. My aunt Annuciata insisted that her sister-in-law had no more courage than a kid; but my dear mother was so gentle and good, every one loved her."

"Do all in your power to resemble her, Theobald; but what were you going to do on the continent?"

"To pursue my studies, madame; my father was to have placed me at college, after we had visited my aunt Folmont, the only living relation on my mother's side. We did not intend to undertake the voyage until next spring; but my aunt wrote to say she was very ill, and my mother determined to set off at once."

Divine service being at this moment announced by the church bell, the baroness advised Theobald to attend.

"My footman shall conduct you," said she; "Pray the Almighty for your father and mother; it is now all you can do for them."

"No, not all," replied the youth, moving away.

"Did you hear that?" said I, to my friend.

"Alas! I did," she replied; "a vague desire of vengeance already fills that young heart. I particularly observed him all day yesterday, and am convinced that the only hope for him lies in a truly Christian education; otherwise, one day or other, his hands will be stained with blood. He is proud, violent, and vindictive like all his race; he also possesses all the great qualities of the national character,—courage, honour, the love of family and of his country, and knowledge of his own dignity. Ah! he is, indeed, a true Corsican."

"Yes, the Corsican of the mountains," said the Dr. Saludo, who at this moment joined us.

We turned at his voice.

"Do not all Corsicans resemble each other?" said I, somewhat mischievously; for he was of ~~Bastia~~ and I liked to tease him.

"No, a thousand times no, madame, their

customs and manners are as different as the territory they inhabit. The people of Bastia, for example, and the inhabitants of all the larger towns—I may also add the country people of La Balagne, of Nebbio, or of Cape Corse, in fact, that portion of the island which is most laborious and most civilized, do they resemble, think you, the mountaineers of Sartène, of Ajaccio, or Corte? It must be borne in mind that the Phœnicians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Aragonese, the Pisans, the Genoese, the English, and the French, have all in turn possessed Corsica, and each nation impressed the mark of its passage on the natives."

"But," said I, "how is it that on so small a surface all these different customs and manners have not melted little by little, as has already happened in France, in England, and many other countries?"

"Oh, madame, that is easily explained. Corsica is little more than a chain of mountains extending the whole length of the island from Cape Corse to that of Bonifacio; these mountains are crossed by wild and savage gorges and narrow valleys, and up to this day there is very little communication possible. The rivers are not navigable; there are no roads; those from Bastia to Ajaccio and to St. Florent are the only roads where travelling in a carriage is practicable, and those have not yet existed fifty years; everywhere else we must proceed on horseback, across rocks, and through thickets, and at the risk of breaking the traveller's neck. These difficulties, joined to the natural indifference of the Corsican for all that does not concern him personally, cause the inhabitants of places separated only by a hill to remain utter strangers to each other. Many of

the people on the mountains rarely descend to the plain ; and hundreds of country people die without ever having put foot in one of our towns.”

“ Can you in any way explain that love of vengeance common to all Corsicans, and which is the distinctive mark of their character ? During the short time I have been at Bastia, the most civilized town on the island, three murders have been committed in the vicinity I inhabit. Is not this a deplorable state of things ? ”

“ I lament it with you, madame, and with all good and enlightened Corsicans, and they, I am happy to say, are very numerous ; but let us hope the rising generation, educated on the continent, will sooner or later lose their naturally fierce inclinations. The Corsican soldiers serving in your army, where they invariably distinguish themselves by their bravery, and other brilliant and sterling qualities, will there imbibe the spirit of real honour, and bring home to their hearths those lights and principles that must modify the present customs, and, in time, regenerate the whole population. However, we must admit the amelioration will be slow, for the spirit of hatred and vengeance in the heart of a Corsican will long survive the march of improvement. The power of prejudice is such, that it triumphs over the repugnance of the most learned and enlightened men ; while the fear of scorn and contempt, which is the portion of those who refuse to revenge themselves (that human respect which unfortunately is stronger than the voice of conscience), has, I regret to say, often induced men to commit murder who were naturally disposed to be good and virtuous.”

“ Great heaven ! ” I exclaimed, “ to make murder a point of honour ! To erect it into a virtue

This is dreadful, your countrymen must be very bad."

"You know they are not," said the doctor with warmth; for while admitting the baneful effects of "*La Vendetta*," the good man would not listen to a word against the national honour. "The Corsican is full of good qualities; he is courageous, hospitable, and faithful to his word and engagements. Fraud and rapine are unknown to him. You may leave your house open day and night, and travel charged with gold, without fearing the abstraction of the smallest coin; robbery, and all crimes suggested by low or sordid passions, are considered a stain, and inspire the most profound contempt in public opinion. '*La Vendetta*' never would have taken such root with us, if the principle did not proceed from a feeling of honour, and from an exaggerated sense of justice."

"What, '*La Vendetta*' a sense of justice!" I exclaimed, interrupting the doctor; "you will have some difficulty in persuading me of this."

"Because you are not yet sufficiently acquainted with our history," replied he, immediately. "You do not know that the Corsican, oppressed and groaning under the domination of the Genoese, finding no justice or protection, either in the laws or with the magistrates, was compelled to seek it himself in the blade of his stiletto. When the culprit could purchase the pardon of his crime by paying a sum of money it was necessary that the courage of the injured party should serve as counterpoise to the iniquity of the judge."

"'*La Vendetta*' might then have been less odious," said I, "but not less criminal, for in my eyes nothing can justify murder."

"*La Vendetta*, in reality, is no murder;" re-

plied the doctor ; "it is almost always an open and declared war ; it has laws which are always respected. Generally, before commencing hostilities, an emissary of the offended party presents himself before the enemy, and warns him by saying, 'War is declared between us ; I give you eight days to apprise your relations and friends, but at the expiration of that time, beware !' There is no example that this time of armistice has ever been violated by either party. In all this, madame, there is nothing low or even unjust."

"Do not take so much trouble to defend a bad cause," said I, laughing at the doctor's warmth of manner. "I do not reproach you with base or low motives, for I well know you are all but too susceptible on the point of honour."

"Alas !" said the baroness, who till now had listened in silence, "when will the spirit of charity reign on earth ? When will men, who recognize God as their common Father, look on each other as brothers ? I hear continual discussions on the best means of civilizing Corsica. Some pretend it is only necessary to make practicable roads in order that the lights of the times and the march of improvement may circulate freely ; others assert that the institution of a jury has given a mortal blow to the barbarous prejudice of the 'vendetta,' from which it can never rise ; there are some, also, who seriously declare that in destroying the goats, they would do away with the most frequent subject of disputes and subsequent vengeance ; others would burn all the maquis, or thickets, and cultivate the untilled lands. It appears to me that as secondary causes, all this might contribute towards the great work

of civilization ; but I firmly believe that the foundation of Corsican regeneration must lie in Christian education, which alone can ameliorate a whole people, as it improves individuals."

" Now do not contradict me, doctor," added she, seeing Mr. Saludo about to interrupt her ; " I know beforehand all you would say. The Corsican is religious without doubt, and would sacrifice his life if necessary to prove his faith in our blessed Redeemer ; but his devotion is not sufficiently enlightened, he knows the outward practices of religion, but very little of its moral tendencies, which are the essence, very little, in short, of that practical charity and love which Christ's religion enjoins on all. If priests, imbued with this evangelic spirit were sent everywhere, and the means of gratuitous education increased for poor boys and girls, which has already done so much good amongst other people, this, with the establishment of good boarding-schools for the Christian education of young ladies,—for women, in whatever state of subordination they may be held in this country, nevertheless, exercise an immense influence on public opinion,—if, I say, this plan were carried out you would very soon see wonderful results spring from this Christian teaching.

" You are right," said the doctor, in a grave tone. " Yes, you are certainly right ; how is it that this has never been thought of before ? "

" I know not," said the baroness, " but let us go, if you please, and visit your little patient, whom I long to see cured of her fever."

I accompanied them to see Clarita, and perceiving that she was already much better, took my leave, and returned home.

CHAPTER III.

WALK IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF BASTIA.

Having church after vespers, in the afternoon of the same day, my husband informed me that he could not accompany me in our usual walk, being engaged by an affair connected with his business. Annoyed at this disappointment, I took our children and their nurse, directed my steps to the mountain, and, disdaining the beaten tracks, went to the right among flowering heaths and laurels or myrtle. We soon found ourselves in a deep and narrow ravine, entirely covered with wild cherry-trees, lentisques, and the rose-laurel, so common in the island. Crossing the little brook which unnnured at the bottom, we ascended about half of the hillside, when we reached a kind of glen shaded by oak and olive-trees. Some fatigued by the steep ascent, I seated myself on a rock of granite covered with moss. A forest of strawberry-trees with their red and flexible twigs, their evergreen foliage, and small white flowers, shot their scarlet fruit in every direction; the ground was covered; my children picked up a great quantity with which they filled their straw hats; they ate part of them, and began to play with the remainder. The setting sun had dimmed the horizon, not a cloud veiled the  of the heavens, the valley lay at our

feet with all its luxuriant vegetation, and the sea presented itself to our view, majestic and boundless, like infinity, of which it is an image. The transparency of the atmosphere was such, that the coast of Tuscany, more than twenty leagues distant, was distinctly visible.

The wild rocks of Monte Christo and Capraija threw their shadows on the sleeping waves; and the white houses of the island of Elba appeared clearly, lighted as they were by the oblique rays which gilded them. I long contemplated this isle, celebrated as it is by the remembrance of the great man whose birth-place was Corsica, and who, after having subjugated nearly the whole of Europe, found himself reduced to the possession of this poor little kingdom, where his great soul could not exist. I sighed when I thought of this great reverse of fortune, and, looking around, beheld my children, so blooming, so joyous. I thought myself so happy and fortunate in my middle station, under this pure sky, in the midst of this magnificent vegetation—this perfect solitude—that my heart softened, my eyes filled with tears of gratitude, and, falling on my knees, I gave thanks to the Almighty for showering upon me so many favours. When I recovered from this kind of ecstacy, the sun's orb had disappeared beneath the waves. It was more than time to return home. I called my children, and they ran before me. We hastened on, following the windings of the hill. We soon reached a wood of chestnut-trees, whose yellow leaves strewed the ground, for it was autumn. Multitudes of little birds were singing in the higher branches. This, with the murmur of a limpid brook falling in mimic cascades over fragments of

rock, formed a real, though quite a different, scene of enchantment. "Oh God!" said I in my inmost heart, "how generous art Thou thus to diversity Thy gifts, in order to multiply our pleasures." And, walking on slowly, plunged in a sweet reverie, I was startled by an almost imperceptible rustle. I stopped to listen; it was like the footfall of a man on the dead leaves which crackled under his weight.

To meet a human being in the neighbourhood of a town containing a population of 13,000 souls, may appear a very natural occurrence, but it was so late, and the place so retired and solitary, that I trembled involuntarily. The sound at each instant became more distinct. I tried to raise my courage by thinking it was some villager returning home, and endeavoured to laugh at my fears, although my heart continued to beat far more quickly than usual. It approached nearer and more near, then suddenly ceased; I turned round and perceived at the distance of ten steps, a very tall man, between two chestnut-trees, who contemplated us with eyes, that in the darkness appeared like those of a lynx. The lower part of his face was hidden by a long and bristling beard, which reached to his chest; the pelone (or mantle) of long hair which covered him, gave him the appearance of a wild animal at that hour; his head was concealed by a long pointed cap. A gun on his shoulder, and a cartouche bag, with a pistol on the left side, completed his accoutrements. He held a small horse by the bridle, which was pawing the earth with impatience. I looked long, in spite of myself, at this strange apparition, which exercised a kind of fascination upon me, for I was transfixed with terror. At length recalling all

my energy, I took my children, one in each hand, and began to run as fast as I could on the uneven ground ; but all at once I was arrested by the very brook I had so much admired a few minutes before. It was not deep, but much too wide to pass with dry feet ; I knew not what to do, for I dared not go back. At this moment I heard a voice crying, in the Corsican idiom, "Let me assist you ;" and before I knew what plan to pursue, I felt myself raised by two strong nervous arms and safely placed on the other side. I uttered a cry, at which the man with the long beard smiled ; he took over the children and nurse in the same manner, and said, as he walked by my side,—

" You are not a native of this place, signora ?"

" No, sir," I replied in a somewhat trembling voice.

" But you live at Bastia ?"

" For the last six months I have lived in the town."

" Ah ! no doubt your husband has a situation under the French government ?"

" Precisely," I replied, much surprised at the kind of examination I was undergoing, not knowing at that time how curious the Corsican is by nature.

" Has your husband a good place ?" continued my questioner.

" I can only assure you we are perfectly satisfied."

" Well, and how do you pass the time at Bastia ?"

" You should know that better than I, for no doubt you are a native."

" I a native of Bastia !" cried he, in a tone of contempt. " Oh, no, signora, thank you ; I am

from beyond the mountains : there is, do you see, as much difference between a Corsican of my country and a Bastiaccio, as there is between the blade of my stiletto and a dinner-knife." And with these words he drew from a dirty morocco case the brightest, and apparently the keenest, stiletto I had ever seen. I took care not to contradict him, being very anxious to terminate our interview.

"Here is a path that will take you straight to the town, as it is there you wish to go," said he, pointing out a narrow road winding through the thicket of underwood.

"Thank you," said I, bowing to him, "I will immediately take it, as I am anxious to return home." He watched me for some time, still holding his horse by the bridle ; then I heard him turn away, humming an old song. When I reached home I found several friends waiting for me ; I immediately related my adventure. They all laughed much at my alarm. I said I had taken the man for a bandit, and any one in my place would have done the same.

"And if it had been a bandit," said Dr. Saludo, "what then ? You would have had nothing to fear, for your husband is not in *vendetta* with any one that I know of ; and even were it so, women and children are always respected. The term bandit, which appears to alarm you so much, does not signify either a thief or a low criminal, but simply an accused man who is outlawed ; and in Italian it means literally a banished man. The bandit watches his enemy and kills him, with a certain aim, if he meets him ; but he would not touch an inoffensive man, far less a woman. He accepts from his friends the ammunition necessary for his

kind of life—often, indeed, the bread and polenta for his support; but far from taking the most trifling article, he would consider it a duty to punish in the most exemplary manner those capable of such baseness, so much would he fear being confounded with them. Indeed, the kind of existence which the bandits lead is not considered dishonourable, and you frequently see very worthy people do them kind offices, and on terms of friendship with them. For many of these men re-enter society after having passed the time of their outlawry, and take the place they formerly occupied there without having lost in public opinion."

"All this does not prevent the eyes of my adventurer with the long beard from being very extraordinary eyes," said I laughing; "but really, my dear doctor, all the Corsican bandits should unite in bestowing upon you a lancet of honour for the warm manner in which you take up their cause."

CHAPTER II.

APPENDIX.

Very early the following morning I received a note from my friend, Madame D——, containing these words only:—“The child disappeared last night; I am greatly perplexed, and expect you as soon as possible.” I threw a shawl over my morning dress and hastened to the house of the baroness.

“How did this happen?” I asked.

Madame D—— was seated in the ante-room, and appeared in the greatest anxiety.

“Heaven only knows how it happened; the child was much better and calmer than on the previous day; I kept him with me the whole of yesterday; he related many interesting circumstances regarding his family; I endeavoured to give him good advice, spoke to him of his duty to God and to his poor little sisters, to whom he had promised to become a father. He seemed to listen with pleasure, and surprised me by his replies, full of good feeling; his observations were really above his age. We prayed together for his father and mother, and he shed tears abundantly at the remembrance of them. In the evening, much company arrived; I sent him into ~~the~~ ^{the} room; the servants say they saw him

walking alone at dusk in the garden ;—in short, he has disappeared, and we have found no trace of him, although I have done everything possible to find him. What think you of it all, my dear friend ? ”

“ I think that this is a very extraordinary country, and hope this boy has not already conceived some project of vengeance ! Did you remark that he carried a stiletto under his vest ? ”

“ Madame need not be alarmed at that,” said the lady’s-maid—who was working at the window ; “ almost all the Corsican children carry a stiletto at eight or nine years of age. It is the custom here.”

“ What a terrible custom ; and how uneasy I feel,” said the baroness. “ This child interested me to the greatest degree ; perhaps I was responsible, as he was in my house ; what shall I say to his relations, when they come to claim him ? Are they not sufficiently unhappy ? ”

“ Calm yourself,” said I, “ Theobald is not lost ; perhaps he has gone to Vesina, to the hovel where his mother died, or to pray on her tomb—who can tell ? ”

“ That is a very probable conjecture,” said the baroness, somewhat relieved. “ I will send immediately to Pictranera.”

“ It will be useless,” said an old Corsican woman, in her native dialect, who had been standing for a few moments in the doorway. We turned on hearing her voice, and recognized Francesca, the purveyor of water from Cardo, who carried a large basket on her head, filled with vessels containing water, and covered with rushes and foliage.

Cardo is a small town now falling into ruin, built on a rising ground half a league from the seashore. It flourished at the time when Bastia was nothing more than a hamlet consisting of fishermen's huts, and was called the marine of Cardo. The water of the spring at Cardo being of extraordinary purity and flavour, has become the object of small commerce to the poor women of the place. Francesca, who supplied ours, was very dark, nearly black, and much wrinkled. An old plaid handkerchief was the only covering to her white hair, when she did not raise the second blue or black petticoat over her head, which serves as a mezzaro to the poor people. She was barefooted, and her whole appearance denoted poverty approaching extreme indigence. But notwithstanding all this, Francesca's destiny might have been very brilliant. She was young and handsome in 1787, when Bernadotte, afterwards Charles John, king of Sweden, was a private soldier in the regiment of royal marines. He was employed on the works of the road between Bastia and St. Florent, and often saw the young girl. He fell in love with her, and proposed marriage; but Francesca's father refused the offer, because the youth at that time possessed nothing but his courage and his talents, though both were unimpeachable. Time passed on: Bernadotte dictated laws to Sweden, and poor Francesca carried the water of Cardo! We were well acquainted with this circumstance in the poor woman's life; and we often wondered among ourselves if Francesca would have been happier, seated on the throne of Sweden, than she was in her laborious and obscure existence.

"Why do you say it will be useless to send to

Pietranera, my good woman?" asked the baroness kindly.

"Because the lad you are in search of is not at Pietranera, but in the thicket out there. I cannot exactly say where. I saw him pass yesterday evening on horseback, and recognized him. He was accompanied by Burcica the bandit. They both stopped to drink at the spring. I offered them some bread and milk, and my neighbour filled their pockets with lentils."

"Gracious heavens! Theobald in the maquis!" cried the baroness; "a child barely fourteen years of age in such a place!"

"But is Burcica not a man, with a long beard, and very piercing eyes?" asked I of Francesca.

"Eyes as brilliant as two stars," replied the old woman, "with a lion's heart, and hands of iron; that man never missed his aim!"

"'Tis he!" I exclaimed, and related my meeting with him the previous evening. Two hours later, the Corsican voltigeurs explored the wood in search of Theobald, whom we suspected of some dark project, but they returned the next day without having found him.

Clarita was much better; thanks to the continual care of which she was the object. The poor child was as gentle as a lamb, and most grateful to her benefactress. For some time we concealed from her the flight of Theobald, whom she loved tenderly, and also the death of her little sister, who soon joined her poor mother in heaven. The little angel expired in the arms of the baroness, notwithstanding our care and that of her wet-nurse. Three days passed, and no answer arriving from the mayor of Piovela, the baroness be-

came very anxious. The first Thursday of every month the ladies of charity, or rather of the society, assembled at the business's hotel, to make up the sheets and clothing to be distributed to the poor; each member took home the work she had commenced in order to spare the fund the expense of making. The Thursday having arrived, I went to the work-room like the others; it was one of the large saloons beautifully furnished and decorated. About thirty ladies were assembled, conversing and laughing as they sewed; Madame D—— was cutting out a cotton dress for a poor little girl, who could not go out for want of clothing.

"We are exactly one sleeve too short," said she. "My maid is out, and will not return for an hour or more, and this frock is wanted immediately."

"I will go and buy what you require for the sleeve, and the frock will be finished to-night," said I.

"You are always kind," replied madame, with a sweet smile. I took my bonnet, and went to a shop near the harbour; in ten minutes I was crossing the market-place, my little parcel in hand, when I was accosted by an old woman whom I only knew by sight. "How can a lady like you trouble herself with carrying that parcel? Have you no servants?" I looked at her in astonishment.

"What I say was not intended to hurt you, carissima signora," pursued she; "for we all love you in this neighbourhood. If you please, I will call that woman who is seated down there, to carry your parcel."

"No, my good woman," said I, laughing;

“ Providence has given me arms, and I choose to make use of them.”

“ These French women are very singular,” murmured the old creature, in the Corsican idiom; “ however, she is a good lady, nevertheless.”

I continued my way, and saw a young girl on horseback; she entered the market-square from the main street, and was followed by a boy also on horseback, whom I instantly recognized. It was Theobald. I uttered an exclamation; he saw me at once, coloured very much, instantly leapt from his horse, and ran to me.

“ Whence do you come, naughty boy?” said I, tapping him on the cheek; “ both the baroness and I have been in great anxiety about you.”

“ Indeed, I am very sorry, madame. Burcica promised you should be apprized of my departure. How is my poor sister?” Then turning to his companion, he added, “ Annunciata, this is the lady.”

Annunciata jumped lightly off her horse. She was a tall and handsome girl, about twenty-five years of age; her mourning dress fitting closely, permitted her fine figure to be seen, which was easy, graceful, and at the same time robust. Her mezzaro of rich lace did not conceal her hair, which was darker than the raven’s wing, and formed into thick braids on each side of her face; her eyes shone with unusual brilliancy; all the lines of her countenance recalled the finest types of ancient sculpture; her cheeks were delicately red; her beautifully-formed mouth, however, had a disdainful expression, but her smile, which disclosed a set of white and most regular teeth, softened the face, which otherwise would have worn a somewhat severe expression. She saluted

me with grace. "Madame," said she, with a very strong accent and low voice; "my grandmother and I are most grateful to you, and also to Madame D—, for all your care and kindness to my unfortunate sister-in-law and her poor children." In pronouncing these words, she pressed my hand with warmth, and large tears rolled from her eyes.

"Mademoiselle," I replied, "we can only lament that our efforts were not crowned with happier results. The poor little infant is gone to increase the number of angels in heaven, but Clarita is much better. Will you see her? I will conduct you to the baroness, who will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

She accepted the offer with joy. The countryman who attended her, took the two horses, tied them to a ring in the wall, following the custom of the people who go to market, and told Annunciata he would take the lawyer's letter to the Signor Cafarelli.

"Go at once," said she; then turning to me, "I wait your orders, madame."

This was the first time that Annunciata had left her native village; any but a Corsican girl would have been dazzled and intimidated by what she saw. A servant in rich livery opened the door of the baroness's hotel; the *suite* of drawing-rooms through which we had to pass to the work-room, were all magnificently furnished. The circle of ladies was chiefly composed of the wives of the highest authorities, and the richest inhabitants of the town; the greater number were dressed as for a *fête*, for the ladies of Bastia are extremely fond of dress; several of them, tired with work that had lasted for some hours, were laughing and chatting

together like great girls at a boarding-school. They even talked of having a little music to enliven them, and one had risen at the general request of her companions, to place herself at the piano when we entered the room. At the same instant, every eye was turned to the new comer. Annunciata did not lower hers; no trace of timidity was visible; she advanced with modesty, but without the least appearance of awkwardness, towards the baroness, whom she no doubt distinguished from the rest by Theobald's description, for, of all the ladies present, my excellent friend was certainly the most simple, both in dress and manners. Annunciata addressed her in touching and grateful terms, with a trembling voice. The deportment of the young girl was remarkable for dignity and calmness. The baroness received her with her usual kind manner, and taking her by the hand led her to Clarita's room. This charming child threw herself into the arms of her aunt and Theobald, who had followed us.

"Naughty brother," said she; "why did you go without your little Clarita?"

"Sister," replied the lad, with much gravity; "I had a duty to perform."

"Theobald is now become the head of our family," said his aunt, with a heavy sigh; "it was necessary for him to attend the funeral of his father; it was only the day before yesterday, Clarita, that the remains of my poor brother were placed in the family vault."

"His body was then found?" said the baroness.

"Alas! our shepherds brought it home even before we received your letter. My poor brother had left us the evening before in perfect health, and his body came back to us wounded and disfigured."

gured." The young girl repressed the tears which were ready to fall. "Let us wait patiently, however," said she; "there is justice in Heaven. The two brothers Fabiano have been taken by the *gendarmes*. The supreme court will avenge us, I hope; and if they fail us, — in time young lions become lions," said she, casting a long and significant look on her nephew.

"But why did you leave without apprizing me of your intention, Theobald?" asked the baroness. "Did you not foresee the anxiety your disappearance would cause?"

"I was wrong for leaving without your knowledge, madame," replied the boy; "but our friend Burcica arrived in the evening when I was walking in the garden. He perceived me, jumped the aloe hedge, and told me to follow him, as he had a message for me, and the vicinity of the barracks did not allow of his remaining there. I knew Burcica well, having often taken powder to him from my father; so I had no hesitation in following him. We walked on in silence to the little wood, where he had left his horse. 'Your grandmother has sent me to fetch you,' said he at length. 'To-morrow the last duties are to be paid to our poor Antonio. We must proceed all night; we have not a moment to lose. You will afterwards return to thank the kind-hearted lady who has done so much for you. Besides, I will inform her of the cause of your absence' —"

At this moment a servant announced the visit of Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle Cafarelli, who entered the room immediately. The signor was a thin man, about sixty years of age, with a serious, though benevolent, aspect.

"Mademoiselle," said he, addressing Annunciata, "I have received our friend the lawyer Muletto's letter, and beg to say that my services, as well as my house, are at your disposal."

The young girl bowed. The ladies Cafarelli then advanced. They both wore the national mezzaro, which covered the white muslin hand-kerchief that encircled the mother's head; the daughter wore hers on her fine chestnut-coloured hair. They both embraced Annunciata, as if she had been an old friend, though they now saw her for the first time. The laws of hospitality are such in this country (still in some respects so near a state of nature), that a few lines of recommendation traced by the hand of a friend is sufficient to procure the most pressing and hearty welcome for a stranger. You may in this way make the tour of the island, and everywhere be the object of most delicate attentions. People will dispute the pleasure of receiving you. Except in the large towns there are no inns in Corsica. Travellers are received in the houses of the residents, where, with simple dignity, they bestow the most cordial and graceful welcome — every comfort, in short, that they are able to offer. The Cafarellis insisted on the young girl returning with them, the strangers' room having been already prepared for her. They also invited Theobald, but he preferred staying with his sister. When they took their leave, the baroness and I returned to the work-room.

CHAPTER V.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

THE following day Annunciata acquainted us with her hopes and intentions. The two Fabianos arrived at Piovela the evening before the departure of Antonio Loncini. They were not seen in the village during the whole of the following day, and a shepherd had met them in the thicket armed with guns and pistols. Towards evening the same man found the pocket-book of the elder brother, Giuseppe, very near the scene of the murder, and this contained several letters addressed in his name. Annunciata felt convinced these two men had committed the murder; "and no one," added she, "could have a doubt on the subject." The court must therefore condemn them to death, and thus would terminate the long enmity between the two houses of Loncini and Fabiano, as after them the family was only composed of women.

"And what are your intentions respecting your nephew?" asked the baroness.

"To send him on the continent for his education, as such was the wish of my deceased brother. Indeed, there is no time to be lost, for he has just completed his fourteenth year, and knows nothing but what his mother could teach him. *It is true that my sister-in-law was a very supe-*

rior and clever woman, as regards learning. She could read and write with the greatest facility, besides being acquainted with many other things. As for me, I am ignorant of all this, which is very unfortunate for Theobald. He will forget the little he knows, as he must now remain with us till after the next assizes; for he alone saw the eldest Fabiano aim at his father, and must bear testimony to that effect."

"My aunt," said the boy, gravely, "I have already told you several times that I did not see Fabiano; but when my father fell dead, I instantly thought it was he who dealt the blow."

"Well, then, is not that the same thing?" pursued Annunciata, darting a terrible glance at the youth.

The baroness reflected for a moment.

"Mademoiselle," said she, at length, in her persuasive voice, "as you possess so few resources or means of instruction at Piovela, allow your nephew and niece to remain with me for some time. I will send Theobald to the best school, where he will learn French. In four months, at latest, one of my most intimate friends is going to travel on the continent. I will recommend your nephew to him, and he will place him in an excellent school at Paris, the superior of which is personally known to me. Will this arrangement suit you?"

Annunciata reflected in her turn.

"What you are kind enough to propose is, without doubt, very advantageous," said she at length; "and yet I foresee a circumstance which would render it advisable that Theobald should not leave me. He is still a child, and who knows —?"

She stopped short, as if fearful of committing herself.

“However,” continued Annunciata, “I consent. I know not what I feel in regard to you. You are an angel, madame, and it is impossible to resist your wishes; but it is necessary to consult my grandmother on the subject.”

“Nothing can be more natural or proper,” replied the baroness. “Will you write to her to-day?”

“I have already told you I cannot write,” said Mademoiselle Loncini with a smile. “We mountain girls are only taught to be good housekeepers; we know nothing but that. If you, madame, will kindly write the letter, I will send it by the countryman who is in attendance on me.”

The old lady’s consent arrived in three days.

Annunciata then prepared to leave, to the great regret of the Cafarellis, who wished her to extend her visit. Before her departure she went to take leave of the baroness. She embraced Clarita and Theobald; then, taking the latter aside,—

“Remember,” said she, in a low voice, “that when the heart has recognized the murderer it is as if the eyes had seen the deed performed. At all events, I shall be here the day of the trial.”

She then mounted her horse with the grace of an experienced amazon, bowed to us all, and departed, followed by the countryman. The baroness’s wish of keeping the two orphans with her was suggested by a lively feeling of Christian charity, as were all the actions of this admirable woman, who eagerly seized on every opportunity of doing good. She had quickly discovered that Theobald possessed an excellent disposition, but that he was violent and passionate. Clarita, on the

contrary, was very gentle and full of feeling, but timid and weak ; it was necessary, therefore, that religion should act as a check on the one, as a support and aid to the other, so that they might both advance in life without deviating from the path of virtue. It became then in the highest degree necessary to teach them their Christian duties, and that in such a manner as should make them love religion. Very little time remained for so important a work. This excellent woman lost not a moment. She prayed the Almighty to assist her, charged the superiors of the school to instruct Theobald in writing, orthography, and arithmetic, reserving to herself, in concert with the Abbé Durand, his religious instruction. To avoid fatiguing the minds of her young pupils, she taught them the catechism little by little ; but leading them out on the terrace she made them admire, at one and the same moment, the earth and its rich productions, the heavens with all their magnificence, the deep and illimitable sea.

“ All these wonders are but the pastime of the Most High, the creation one act of His will,” and the children then formed some idea of the wondrous power of God ! Next, calling their attention to themselves, she made them remark the just proportion of their limbs, the perfect and suitable formation of their bodies, the regularity of their features ; their eyes, so readily raised to heaven, our real country ; their ears, open to all harmonious sounds ; their mouths, capable of discerning and appreciating the finest fruits ; and all the senses, in short, which make existence so great a blessing, and enable us to enjoy all the gifts of God. “ But all these gifts,” continued she, “ are but the least of His graces, for He has given us besides a mind

capable of knowing Him, a heart made to adore Him, a soul intended to enjoy His presence throughout all eternity ! ” and the young people, who already comprehended the power of God, understood also something of His infinite goodness. Not satisfied with teaching them the dogmas of our holy religion, she sought to inculcate the spirit of it at the same time. With the New Testament in her hand, she made them follow with the deepest interest the divine life of the Word made Man, in order to save all men, meditating with them on the humility of that God who was content to be born in a stable and to expire on the cross, thereby teaching us to conquer pride and endure affliction; on Jesus who had compassion on all misfortunes; who healed the sick and pardoned the repentant; who said of Himself that He was mild and humble in heart; who taught his disciples that they must pardon their enemies, not seven times, but seventy times seven, that is to say, indefinitely; who, in the torments of His passion, prayed for His executioners, when a look would have reduced them to nothing. Dwelling particularly on all that could inspire the love of our neighbour, and especially on the obligation of forgiveness of injuries, the baroness explained at length the parable of the Good Samaritan and that of the wicked servant, whose lord had taken compassion on him and forgiven a large debt, and who meeting one of his fellow-servants, who owed him an hundred pence, took him by the throat, and threw him into prison, in spite of his prayers; hearing of this, his lord sent for him, and said,— “ I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity

on thee?" and in anger, his lord placed this wicked servant in the hands of justice, and left him there until he had fully paid his debt. She also made them consider the words of our Divine Saviour : "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for those who despitefully use you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven ;" and these not less sublime,—"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Then kneeling with them, she made them repeat these words of the most sublime of all prayers,—"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

While Theobald and Clarita were thus drawing from the source of truth the only principles which can render us happy in this world or in the next ; while these young hearts were opening to the love of God and their neighbour, like the calyx of the flowers to the invigorating dew, the trial followed the usual march of affairs in Corsica, and intrigues multiplied around the tribunal of justice. The brothers Fabiano had been transferred from Corte to Bastia.

For three months they were detained in an unwholesome prison, situated within the enclosure of the citadel, the interior of which was as disgusting as the exterior was repulsive. But their family had not been idle. They had much influence in the country, where they possessed numerous friends, and devoted partisans. Above all things it was most important to prove an *alibi* ; and nothing was forgotten that could in any way

promote this end. Several very doubtful witnesses were summoned ; they apprized the shepherd who had found the pocket-book, that he was to swear at the trial that he had picked it up close to the Fabianos' house, or that a contrary declaration should cost him his life ! The bandit Burcica was informed of all these proceedings, and lost no time in apprizing Annunciata. She was ill in bed, laid up by a violent intermittent fever, so common in many parts of Corsica.

At the news she bounded from her couch like a tigress robbed of her young, and dressing herself in haste she set out in search of the shepherd. It required three days of walking and intense fatigue to find the man. At length, however, guided by Burcica, she discovered the miserable hovel, constructed of branches, and tenanted by poor Santa Crux.

“ Listen to me,” said she, drawing forth the stiletto which she always wore underneath her handkerchief ; “ you know me well and are aware that Annunciata never broke her word ; well, then, if you have the misfortune to conceal the truth, or hide any circumstance, by not declaring the exact spot where you found the pocket-book, with my own hand I will cut out your lying tongue.”

Annunciata returned home much worse ; and the poor shepherd, fully aware of the fate that awaited him, let him make his deposition which way he would, secretly sold off his goats and embarked for Sardinia.

The following week Theobald had to appear as witness before the jury assembled to pronounce the fate of him whom the youth really believed to be the murderer of his father. Annunciata,

in spite of all her desire, was unable to leave her bed. The evening before the trial she sent the following note to Theobald by a certain messenger—Burcica had written the note from her dictation, it ran thus:—“ You are now the head of the family ; your father’s blood cries aloud for vengeance, and this vengeance can only proceed from your mouth or from your arm, so choose between the two.” The contents of this missive filled the poor boy with bitterness ; the prejudices of his childhood returned, perhaps, with renewed strength ; perhaps the enemy of our salvation was working to undermine the foundation of piety in his soul—pure as yet ; however it might be, the youth walked for a long time in the garden, his head bowed down and his heart full of grief. It was one of those magnificent days of winter, milder in this delightful climate than the finest days of spring with us. The waves sparkled with a thousand fires in the sun’s rays ; the air was filled with rich perfume, the fish were sporting in the billows, the insects were humming in the air ; but all the beauties of this rich nature had no power to calm the agitation of his mind ; the light breeze played in his hair without cooling his burning forehead. Clarita saw her brother and hastened to meet him.

“ What detains you here ? ” said she in her caressing voice. “ I have been looking everywhere for you during the last hour,” and the young girl raised her eyes, blue as the azure of the sky. Theobald looked at her in silence, and passing his hand through his sister’s fair curls,—“ You are very like our poor mother,” said he fondly.

“ And you, Theobald, resemble Annunciata, particularly at this moment.”

long, brown hair, a thin, pale visage which appeared younger still from its wearing a pointed beard; his forehead was prominent, his sharp eyes were shaded by eyebrows that appeared always in motion, his lips were thin, and raised at the corners, and this gave an expression of cunning subtlety to his whole physiognomy. He cast a penetrating and assured look on the jury and the excited crowd, saluted his friends by a wave of his hand, and then took his seat with perfect composure.

Giuseppe Fabiano was an officer in a regiment of light infantry, and younger by two or three years than his brother; he showed far less assurance. He was a very handsome young man, much sunburnt, with a frank and open air. Both were dressed with much elegance, in the French fashion, with black frock-coats, trousers with straps, yellow kid gloves, and polished leather shoes.

The tokens were placed on a table before the court,—namely, the bloody clothes of Antonio Lomelini, and the red pocket-book belonging to Giuseppe Fabiano. The magistrates then commenced. Giuseppe replied with an extraordinary presence of mind to all the questions of the president; he declared himself innocent of the crime imputed to him, protested that having arrived at Biocella the evening before the murder, he had not left the village the day it was committed. His conduct on the continent, where he had lived for seven years, had ever been irreproachable. As to the pocket-book, in going to dine with one of his uncles, he had let it drop by accident; but shortly perceiving his loss, he had returned to look for it; Santa Crux had, no doubt, anticipated

him, and, in conclusion, he defied any one to prove the contrary.

Pasquale gave pretty nearly the same account, but in a less assured tone of voice. Upwards of twenty witnesses declared to have seen the two Fabianos at Piovela the day of the event; others, and those were the partisans of the Loncinis, swore they had seen the brothers very early in the morning, proceeding to the wood, with guns on their shoulders. The shepherd, Santa Crux, had disappeared, and all efforts to discover his retreat had been fruitless.

The huissier now called for Theobald Loncini. The moment the orphan was introduced into court every eye was fixed upon him with a profound feeling of pity. Dressed in deep mourning, pale as death, but to all appearance calm, the youth advanced with dignity to the foot of the tribunal; he endeavoured to avoid looking at the Fabianos, so much did he fear that the sight of his father's murderers would rouse all his passion and hatred. At sight of the blood-stained garments he shuddered visibly; he passed his hand across his forehead, as if to chase some fearful thought; but this weakness only lasted a moment, and it was with a firm voice, though his eyes were filled with tears, that he took the accustomed oath. The president of the assizes then commenced the usual series of questions. Every ear now became attentive; for, the shepherd having disappeared, Theobald was the only person who could have seen or recognized the assassin. With a trembling voice he related the departure of his family from the village.

"About twelve o'clock," continued he, "when the sun was at its height, and shone exactly over

our heads, we rested under a large fir-tree (*pin parasol*). My father let the horses graze in the thicket, and we sat down to eat the provisions we had taken with us. After our meal, my father lay down to take his *siesta*; my mother made a kind of couch with her cloak for my sister, who was unwell, while she and I remained talking of that beautiful France that she so longed to revisit. In about an hour, my father awoke, and said 'It is time we proceeded on our journey—I will go for the horses;' but he was scarcely on his feet before the report of a gun was heard, close to us, and my poor father fell to the ground, from which he never rose."

After having pronounced these words, Theobald was completely overcome, and covered his face with his hands.

"What ensued?" asked the president, after a long silence.

Theobald replied in a trembling voice: "My poor mother threw herself passionately on the body of my father, uttering the most despairing cries. Clarita, awoke suddenly out of her sleep, wept also; while I ran like a mad person, to discover from whence the shot came."

"Did you see any one?" asked the President.

"No one," replied Theobald, in an altered tone of voice.

An almost imperceptible movement of satisfaction now lightened the countenance of Giuseppe Fabiano; Pasquale also appeared to breathe more freely.

"Is that all you have to say?" again demanded the president.

Theobald signified by a sign that he wished to speak again.

"Silence—listen again!" cried out the friends of the Loncinis.

"My mother called me to her in a short time," murmured the poor boy, in so low a voice as scarcely to be heard; "she thought she heard a second shot and horses' steps; but I had heard nothing, save her cries of despair, and the rustling of the wind in the foliage of the fir-trees. I wished to seek further, for the murderer could not have been far from us; but she implored me to stay with her, and, taking my hand, she drew me to the middle of the thicket, where we lost ourselves. I have now said all."

"Did you not assert, immediately after the melancholy event, that it was the brothers Fabiano who had shot your father?" asked the president.

"I thought so, in consequence of the enmity that has so long existed between our families, but I repeat I saw no one." And as if overcome by his feelings, he dropped on the seat placed for his use.

The cause of the Fabianos triumphed visibly, for there was no direct proof against the brothers. Their advocate conducted the defence in a manner that showed he believed himself certain of success.

The attorney-general then rose, and had begun to resume the prosecution, when a huissier delivered to the president a letter from Annunciata, which a peasant had just brought; she wrote to say she had a clue to the shepherd's retreat, and implored the tribunal to wait until they had received the evidence of Santa Crux. The affair was then put off for eight days, and the prisoners were taken back to the prison from which they had hoped to be then delivered. Signor Caffarelli, who had not

left Theobald, accompanied him back to the baroness's hotel ; he was in a state of moral suffering impossible to describe, and as soon as he reached the house, the poor youth went to the oratory, where he had prayed for grace the day before. An hour later the baroness and Clarita joined him. Theobald was then much calmer ; his religious feelings, which had given him power in the hour of need, came now also to his aid and consoled him ; he was able to describe the struggles that had taken place in his mind. On the recital of all he had endured, Clarita approached her brother and embraced him affectionately, endeavouring by her caresses to soothe the anguish she so little comprehended, for the children had truly described themselves the day before. Clarita was the exact counterpart of her mother, both morally and physically ; she possessed her gentle timidity, her angelic goodness ; anger and vindictive passions were alike unknown to her ; she would not have injured the most insignificant insect, and from the sight of blood she would have fled with horror. Theobald, on the contrary, possessed, with great personal resemblance to his aunt, her firmness of soul, with the courage and energy he so much admired in Annunciata ; more than this, he also had something of her indomitable pride, her unconquerable irascibility. The baroness listened to Theobald's account with that kind indulgence which never failed her, and she congratulated him on the victory he had achieved over his passions.

“Alas ! my poor child,” said she, “this storm of contending passions will not probably be the last that will disturb your serenity ; but remember that when they exert their terrible power, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those

only who can fight against them are worthy of being Christ's soldiers."

The Sunday following Theobald left Corsica, to the inexpressible regret of Clarita, who was much affected by his departure; like a fragile flower that the slightest breath could bend, she instinctively felt the want of such protection as her brother's presence afforded her; she resembled the ivy, which languishes and falls when separated from the oak which had been its support. Intelligence of the death of Mademoiselle Folmont, the only relation on their mother's side, reached Bastia a few days before Theobald's departure, so that the gentleman in whose charge he was placed took him at once to Paris, and left him at the establishment of Monsieur Duhamel, a worthy ecclesiastic, many years known to the baroness.

It was there that the youth learnt the decision of the Court regarding the brothers Fabiano. The shepherd, Santa Crux, had not been found, notwithstanding the active search and hopes of Annunciata. The accusation against the two brothers therefore rested entirely on the well-known hatred existing between them and the Loncinis, and their criminality being unproved by any positive evidence, they had been acquitted. Clarita remained six months longer with her benefactress. At the expiration of this time she was claimed by her great-grandmother and aunt, and the child returned to her native village, far better instructed, and with infinitely better manners, than the generality of Corsican girls; also carrying in her heart the seeds of Christian virtue, of which the excellent Madame D—— had afforded so rare a model. Some time afterwards, my dear friend, I also left Corsica, bitterly re-

greeting its azure sky, its wonderfully fertile land, and, above all, the lively sympathy and friendship by which I was surrounded, and those dear friends who accompanied me with tears to the steam-boat.

As to the baroness, for whom I entertained the liveliest and most affectionate esteem, she remained for upwards of two years longer at Bastia, strewing blessings around her as thickly as the flowers grow in that delightful climate, persevering in the line of sacrifices and good works she had traced for herself; because her benevolence took its source, not only in the natural goodness of her heart, but, above all, in her fervent piety, and in the love of God, that true source of all real charity. At the expiration of that time, she also left Corsica, leaving behind her the remembrance of her virtues, and somewhat of those feelings of veneration which the names of François de Sales and Vincent de Paul excite in all.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE STEAM-BOAT.

A LONG time had passed since the acquittal of the brothers Fabiano. The day on which they celebrated the fifth anniversary of this memorable event, a steam-vessel, *Le Liamone*, had left Marseilles in the morning, and was caught in so violent a tempest, that the captain, an old and experienced officer, declared he had rarely seen anything to equal its fury. The sky was dark, and the sea covered with foam; the hurricane blew with such force that at times it appeared as if it would raise the vessel altogether out of the boiling waves, and then as if it would bury it in the deep abyss. The sailors redoubled their zeal and activity, while the trembling passengers remained below, suffering horribly from sea-sickness. This scarcely left them strength to address their prayers to *Notre Dame de la Garde*, to implore her protection in saving them from imminent shipwreck. One alone remained on deck without appearing to feel alarm, or to suffer from illness; he was a young man, apparently about twenty years of age, of tall and graceful stature, with handsome and

noble countenance ; he had large almond-shaped black eyes, dark complexion, black hair, with a fine high forehead, and most intelligent expression ; his dress was simple, but in perfect taste. When the lightning gleamed, he devoutly crossed himself, according to the Corsican custom, without false shame as without affectation ; he then continued to watch the tempest with all the calm of perfect security.

“ Signor Loncini,” cried the captain, “ will you assist these good fellows who are endeavouring to shorten sail ? Your life, as well as ours, depends upon it.”

“ Most willingly, captain,” replied the young man. He threw off his great coat, took his place among the sailors, whom he assisted with so much presence of mind, strength, and address, that the captain cried several times “ Bravo, signor, bravissimo ! One would swear you had never done anything else in your life. What a pity you are not a sailor.”

In the mean time the tempest moderated in a slight degree, the motion of the vessel was not so great, the waves broke with less violence over the deck, and a ray of sunshine, bringing hope with it, began to gild the stern of *Le Liamone*.

“ Now all is going on satisfactorily,” exclaimed the captain in a joyful tone ; “ with the blessing of God, we shall breakfast to-morrow at Bastia, as if nothing had happened. Thank you for your timely assistance, Signor Loncini ; you have been of great service to us. On my faith you would make an admirable sailor.”

Our old acquaintance, Theobald, pressed the captain’s hand, which he had offered him, put on his great-coat, and took his place on the quarter

deck. The noise of the waves, the solitude of the deep, the tempest, the shoals, the perils—in short, all were so many sources of enjoyment to him, for he was brave and energetic; emotions were new to him, as he had only just left school. For the first time he was free, and absolute master of his time. He was going to revisit his native country, his beloved home, his great-grandmother, and the sister, whose image haunted his dreams, adorned by all the graces and virtues of her sex. This gentle and fond girl, whose affectionate letters had consoled him in all his troubles, encouraged him in his labours, he was going to see at last, to be her protector, and to fulfil the promise he had made to his dying mother, of being a father to her.

Theobald's heart bounded with joy and pride as he thought of all he would do for his sister; he required for himself but little of the fortune of his parents; fifteen thousand francs would be sufficient for the purchase of the notary's practice at Corte. All the rest, with the house, the grounds, and land at Piovela, should form Clarita's marriage portion; to this he would add his share in the succession of his aunt, Mademoiselle Follmont, and also what he would inherit from his great-grandmother. By this arrangement, the young girl would become the greatest heiress in the district, and might select her husband among the best and most virtuous.

But before she settled, Theobald determined to complete her education himself; he would instruct her, particularly in history and geography, and the usual branches; he would give her some idea of botany, &c.; he would rejoice in her progress, become the confidant of her thoughts, the intimate friend of her youth; in a word, he would make

her an accomplished woman. And who was more capable than he of realizing all he planned? What man of his age united in a greater degree learning and the perseverance necessary to obtain it? Whose progress had been more rapid than his own?

When he was placed at the Abbé Duhamel's, he could scarcely read French or Italian fluently; of Latin or Greek he had not the slightest idea; but he possessed all the intelligence of his countrymen, united to the strength of mind and tenacity peculiar to the good heads of the north. The tragical death of his parents had made a deep impression upon him, and his promise of being a father to Clarita, was never absent from his mind. But to fulfil this promise as promptly as possible, it was indispensable to terminate his studies and keep his terms, for his relations wished him to pass as advocate before he returned home. He worked hard, not with the carelessness habitual to youth, but with the ardour of one already arrived at man's estate; not with the wish of excelling his companions, and obtaining the prizes, but in the far nobler design of fulfilling a duty. The professors, delighted with his application, seconded his endeavours; he made astonishing progress, and reached the fourth class during the first year, and each succeeding year saw him mount two classes higher. At seventeen years of age he passed the degree of bachelor, at twenty he was advocate; and without doubt, through the protection of Heaven, who rewarded his good intentions, Theobald's health did not suffer in any way from this intense application. On the contrary, his constitution developed, his strength increased, and the child became a man full of

energy and vigour. The Abbé Duhamel had a really paternal regard for him, and continued the work so well commenced by the baroness ; on all occasions he corrected the hasty temper of his pupil, curbed the impetuosity of his passions, and made him not only a man of honour, but a fervent and enlightened Christian. When Theobald had left the boarding-school, and was studying for the law, the abbé remained his confidant and best friend, and this was creditable not only to the master, but also to the pupil. In his conduct to those of his own age, Theobald was always obliging, always a good fellow ; he could bear the jokes, and forgive the tricks that were played upon him occasionally ; he appeared to have entirely cast off his former vindictive feelings, and forgotten the prejudices of his childhood ; but he had lost nothing of the noble qualities of his former character, consequently his gratitude to the baroness amounted to enthusiasm. He had visited her twice at Paris, and those days had been more full of happiness than those of the distribution of prizes, when he bent under the weight of those he carried off, and when his heart swelled with the acclamations that greeted his repeated successes. Notwithstanding, however, his affection for the baroness and the Abbé Duhamel, the person who filled the largest place in his heart, she on whom his thoughts and hopes centered, she whose future prospects preoccupied him in the midst of the angry waves, was Clarita, his beloved sister ; her happiness was to be his aim through life. Theobald was lost in golden dreams of joyful anticipation, when he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder ; he turned instantly, "Well, signor," cried the captain, "of what can you be thinking so intently

that you forgot the dinner-hour? The storm has abated, and as you do not suffer from sea-sickness, come and taste my soup; we have certainly well earned it to-day."

Theobald followed the captain. There was another guest, a short, thin, and apparently delicate man, whom he recognised as a countryman by his accent.

"We are the only people who are hungry this afternoon," said the captain. "The passengers are thinking of anything but eating just now, I can tell you; and even you, Signor Casanova, I would lay a wager, could not have kept us company four hours ago."

"That is very true," replied the little man. "I never suffered so severely before, and this is the third time I have made this voyage."

"The hurricane was very violent," observed the captain; "and even I, old sailor that I am, would have been tormented with sea-sickness, like a delicate young lady, if I had had time to think of it."

"Well, I felt nothing of what you call sea-sickness," remarked Theobald, "perhaps like you, captain, I was too much occupied to pay attention to it."

"Occupied, and in what way, may I ask?"

"In watching the lightning as it rent the clouds, the waves that rose like mountains around us, and our vessel that appeared a black speck in the midst of that ocean of foam. Oh! how magnificent, how sublime is a tempest!"

"At your age I thought so, too," said the captain; "but believe me, Signor Loncini, one gets tired of everything, even of danger; and now I prefer a good fresh wind, that sends me safely to

the end of my voyage, to all the tempests in the world."

" You call him Loncini," said Casanova in the captain's ear ; " is he related to the Loncinis of Piovela ? "

" The only one of the name that remains," replied the captain in a low voice, " and a fine fellow, as you can see."

" As he is returning to his native place, the Fabianos had better look to themselves," murmured Casanova.

The captain gave a sign of acquiescence.

Theobald had heard all, and remained silent ; but a feeling of melancholy seized him, he sat perfectly still with his eyes fixed on his plate.

" You have no appetite, my young friend," said the captain, tapping him familiarly on the shoulder ; " you must keep up your strength, for the future I mean ; at present, thank God ! we have nothing to fear ; the sea is as passive as a fiery horse that has just received a good lesson from his rider. Still, we must not be too sure, for it is the *libeccio* that blows, and if we had not steam to assist us, we should run the risk of being a month on our voyage, as has happened to me before to-day."

" Steam is indeed a great and magnificent discovery," said Theobald, making an effort to shake off the melancholy thoughts that began to assail him ; " it facilitates commerce and is a means of correspondence everywhere."

" In truth, I do not see that we householders have much reason to flatter ourselves on that account," interrupted Casanova, " provisions become dearer, our woods are unpeopled, our thrushes and blackbirds that we used to buy six sous the dozen, now fetch nearly the same price

each bird; and many more Corsican hares and partridges find their way to the market at Marseilles than we can find on those of Bastia or Ajaccio."

"Bah, bah," said the captain, "you must not complain. In return you receive good ready money, which circulates in the country; without reckoning the foreign wine and the articles of luxury we bring you daily."

"Add to those advantages the lights of civilization which must result from our more frequent intercourse with the continent, and which, I trust, will ere long soften our manners, at present somewhat barbarous."

"What do you say, Signor Loncini?" interrupted Casanova with great vivacity; "I would wager you are fresh from a French college. Were not our fathers such as we are? Does not our sobriety and bravery outweigh in your opinion the effeminate customs of the continent?"

"No one esteems true courage more highly than I do," replied Theobald in a calm tone; "and I hope to prove mine when a worthy occasion presents itself. But can we not preserve our virtues, while we correct our faults? And would our arm be less powerful against the enemies of the state, our hearts less determined to resist them, because we had become more enlightened, and possessed in a clearer manner ideas of order and justice?"

"Ahem," said the captain, who had as high an opinion of Theobald's learning as of his physical strength, and was besides distantly allied to the family. "His tongue is equal to his arm any day. What say you, Casanova? Annunciata will have reason to be proud of the head of the family."

"Yes, yes," said Casanova in a low voice, as he rose from table, "he has but just left college, and speaks very morally now; but let him get back to his native mountains, and I repeat the Fabianos had better look to themselves."

These words were also overheard by Theobald, although they were not intended for him; and he mounted to the deck, discontented with himself and all the world.

"Have not the Fabianos been acquitted by a jury of their countrymen?" said he to himself; "what then do they expect from me?"

Then recollection came to his assistance, and a thousand memories crowded his mind.

He dwelt upon the hatred which had existed for centuries between the families, that memorable combat, of which his great-grandmother had so often related the details when he, a young child, sat on the knees of the old lady, the never-forgotten combat, in which two of the Loncinis and four of the Fabianos were killed, although the latter were by far the most numerous; and then he remembered his own house besieged like a stronghold, and defended by his father and aunt with all the courage of despair.

At this time the image of Annunciata with her indomitable spirit, her masculine courage, returned to his imagination, decked with the charming features of a Bradamante, or a Clorinde, as he had seen them portrayed in one of the pictures at the exhibition. But above all, the terrible remembrance of his father's assassination, of his mother expiring in a hovel, all the dreadful circumstances consequent on the dastardly and odious crime committed in cold blood, recurred vividly to his mind, and the prejudices of his child-

hood, which he thought forgotten for ever, awoke with redoubled strength. The bloody apparition of all the Loncinis fallen under the blows of the Fabianos whirled around him as if the blasts of the terrible *libeccio*, which blew from the land and arrested the march of the *Liamone*, brought with them not only the aromatic exhalations and perfumes of the mountains, but all the hateful passions of its inhabitants.

“Oh! my God, have mercy upon me!” cried he, making an effort to chase the phantoms from his brain that had been conjured up by his imagination and which now seemed to pursue him pertinaciously. Seated on a heap of cordage, his head between his hands, he endeavoured to recall the Christian lessons he had received from the baroness and the Abbé Duhamel. By degrees, peace slowly entered his mind; then falling on his knees, he made his nightly prayer with more than usual fervour, for he felt an inward conviction that it would require a supernatural power to conquer himself, and that those passions he had thought for ever quenched were but a hidden fire that the slightest breath was sufficient to kindle, and that alas! they were powerful enough to overwhelm all his good resolutions. He prayed long for his father and mother, his daily custom, deeming with truth, that his prayers and good works would be better for the repose of their souls, than a culpable vengeance. When he arose, he had regained all his former serenity, astonished at having lost it for a moment, in consequence of the words of a stranger, whose personal ideas and feelings should have no power to influence his conduct in any way.

So true is it that prayer is a sovereign balm for every trouble, it has consolations for every misfortune, it tranquillizes those pains that the wisest thoughts, the most philosophic reasoning have not the power to moderate; but Theobald did not at this moment think of all this, he felt happy in the past, and thought himself strong against the future. He felt instinctively that there might well arise a struggle in his mind between his present opinions and his former prejudices, but he harboured no doubt, he felt certain the former would be victorious. His ideas were so firmly fixed, his resolutions so well grounded, that there could be no fear of falling. The sanguinary thoughts that had just assailed him, the phantoms which appeared to cry out for vengeance, seemed now but a delusion of his brain, shaken by the tempest; in fact, a momentary madness. He returned thanks to heaven, and confident, as all are, at his age, without foreseeing what evil suggestions may bring about, or what dangers would threaten him, he once more gave himself up to the sweet dreams of happiness and fraternal love. The sky was beautifully clear, for the *libeccio* had blown away every vestige of a cloud, the stars shone in the azure expanse, the sea as blue, reflected their light on its moving waters, and reproduced them in such infinity, that the ocean appeared studded with stars. Theobald's heart was too pure to remain insensible to the majesty of this spectacle—his soul became exalted—by degrees he passed from the contemplation of this sublime scene to the admiration of the intelligence of man, who was now capable of mastering the elements, of forcing the waves to conduct him on his way, and steam to serve as an obedient charger; then

lifting his mind from the creature to the Creator of all things, he asked himself what must be the power of Him who with one word had made man so small and insignificant, as regards the place he fills in the universe, so great by the resources of his genius and by the hope of immortality?

All slept on board the *Liamone*, except the sailors on duty and the stokers; nothing was heard but the murmur of the waves as they beat against the sides of the vessel, and the monotonous noise of the wheels as they cleft the waters; but still the young man remained plunged in meditation.

At midnight, feeling the necessity of repose, for he had passed the two preceding nights in travelling, he went to the saloon; but finding all the beds occupied, he disturbed no one, and re-ascended to the deck, where he wrapped himself in his cloak, improvised a bed between two bales of merchandise, and slept between heaven and earth, the calm sleep of youth and innocence.

CHAPTER II.

COURAGE AND MODESTY.

THE sun had already risen and illuminated the horizon, when Theobald half awoke, gently and agreeably rocked by the motion of the vessel. A light breeze played on his hair, and the perfume of the *pinus lariccio* filled the air. He remained for some minutes in that happy state of perfect comfort, which is neither sleep nor wakefulness, hearing, without understanding what was passing around him, uncertain if he was not still in his little room of the Quartier Latin, or in the dormitory of Monsieur Duhamel. At length the hoarse voice of a sailor, who was scolding an unfortunate cabin-boy, drew him completely from this state of drowsiness; he rose with a bound, and uttered an exclamation of joy, as he perceived land at the distance of a couple of hundred feet, for the vessel was at the moment doubling Cape Corse. Tears of emotion filled his eyes; he opened his arms to the barren rocks and stunted fir-trees that fringe the shores of his much-loved country. His morning prayer was all love and gratitude; he poured out his heart in thanksgiving to God for restoring him to his relations, to his native place, where he hoped to do good, and to lead a useful life. No afterthought, no

anxiety for the future, cast a gloom over these first delicious moments of unmitigated joy. At the same time a pretty black and white bird fell close to him, as if to repose itself. Theobald took up the little creature, kissed it with delight as the first living thing that saluted his return; and taking a biscuit from his pocket, he broke it, and threw the crumbs on the deck; the bird having regained its liberty, commenced eagerly picking them up, which delighted the youth.

“May I never do anything but good in the country to which I am returning, and may it please God that no one shall ever have more cause to complain of me than this pretty little creature whom I have just fed.”

Thus he thought. At the same time a lady came on deck, accompanied by a little boy of seven or eight years of age, and a respectable female servant. The lady was very pale, having suffered greatly during the four-and-twenty hours she had been on board; the captain had just advised her to leave the ladies’ cabin, and to breathe the fresh morning air on deck, assuring her the wind from the land would prove of great benefit to her. She seated herself on a bench with her head bowed down, and remained in this state without paying the least attention to what passed before her; for the effect of sea-sickness is to deprive the sufferer of all energy. The maid appeared as much overcome as her mistress; she lay down on a plank motionless; the child alone had preserved all the vivacity natural to his age.

“George, sit down close by me,” said his mother; “and do be good, for I am ill.”

The child obeyed; but after a short space,

getting tired of inactivity, so irksome at his age, he rose, took some marbles out of his pocket, and began playing with them. Neither his mother nor the nurse remarked his absence. In an instant he was running about the deck in all directions.

“ Will you be quiet, young one ? ” cried a sailor, whom George had run against, in the exuberance of his spirits. The child, frightened by the rough voice and unprepossessing look of the old sailor, ran and hid himself in a corner of the quarter-deck, and began watching the sea, and the great fish following the boat, which threw up the water through their nostrils. He then commenced climbing on the trunks and cases, and from them on to the iron rod that serves as a guard. Theobald was there, still plunged in thoughts of home ; on looking up, he perceived the child astride on the balustrade. Alarmed at the danger which the rash little fellow ran, he rose to lift him to the deck, when a violent lurch of the vessel caused the child to lose his balance. A faint cry, and the sound of a body falling into the water, were heard simultaneously. The *Liamone* advanced with her usual rapidity, and all would have been over, if the young Corsican had not with the quickness of thought plunged into the sea.

Theobald was an expert swimmer, and in a few moments seized the child by the hair and held him above water. The steamboat was a long way off. Happily, those who had witnessed the accident and the conduct of Theobald ran and apprized the captain. He immediately ordered the engines to be stopped, and a boat being lowered, was sent to pick up Theobald and his charge, who were soon safe on board. The fright

and despair of the mother had entirely dissipated her illness. She wrung her hands convulsively, and cried out in a most heartrending manner. At the sight of George, whom Theobald placed safely on his mother's knees, the poor lady had nothing but tears with which to express her gratitude. As to the young man, he descended to the captain's room, with the excuse of changing his clothes, streaming with sea water, but far more for the purpose of giving himself up, without any witness, to the ineffable delight which overflowed his heart. Oh! how happy and proud he felt at having saved a precious life, and for having restored a child to its mother. His heart bounded with joy, beneath his wet garments. His mouth murmured words of praise and ejaculations of gratitude to Heaven for granting him this opportunity of being useful to his neighbour, and for permitting him to commence the new life that was opening before him with a meritorious action. This circumstance appeared to him a good omen, accomplished as it was in sight of his birthplace, the land of Corsica. How pitiful and contemptible seemed to him the savage joy of vengeance in comparison to the delicious emotions that now filled his soul. How superior the happiness of having done a praiseworthy action to the gratification of self-love, which he had so often experienced in the plaudits his classical studies had obtained for him.

The captain, surprised at his long absence, went in search of him.

"What the deuce are you doing here so long, my good fellow?" said he. "All the passengers are on deck asking after you, and Madame de Belmont awaits you with impatience. She fears

you are ill, and, on my faith, I begin to think so, too."

"On the contrary, I never felt better," replied Theobald, hastily completing his toilet. "But who is this Madame de Belmont that is kind enough to interest herself about me?"

"Who is she? Why, my dear fellow, the mother of the little boy whose life you saved—a most amiable lady, going now to join her husband, who commands a battalion at Corte. Come, that I may present you to her."

"In truth, my good friend," interrupted our hero, "I have no wish to be made a sight of. How do you think I shall look in the midst of all these people, who will fix their eyes upon me? Let me go alone on deck, that I can mix with the crowd without attracting any one's notice."

"No, no, a hundred times no!" cried the captain. "It is my good will and pleasure to introduce you to all. Why, you are my countryman, and almost my relation."

"Well, well, as you insist, I will accompany you," said Theobald, with a resigned air, at the same time endeavouring to avoid everything like awkwardness in his demeanour.

"This is the hero—the young man who — the courageous Loncini—in short, my countryman and relative, whom I have the honour to present to all," cried the captain, in his simple and somewhat homely language.

Theobald felt himself blush at this singular speech; for, as he had foreseen, every eye was fixed on him. But he recovered himself immediately, and, assuming the impassible demeanour of the Corsicans—which baffles observation, and allows you so rarely to guess the emotions which

agitate them—he replied gracefully to the acknowledgments of Madame de Belmont, who expressed her gratitude with all the energy of maternal love.

Theobald took little George into his arms, not sorry, perhaps, for this opportunity of recovering himself.

“Embrace monsieur,” said the lady to her son, “for without him your mother would now be childless.”

“I entreat, madame, you will say no more on the subject,” said Theobald, to whom the gratitude of the lady was a sweet as well as sufficient reward. “I thank Heaven for having been so fortunate as to render you a service. In my place, any one would have acted as I did. I was the lucky person on this occasion, that is all.”

“O God! what would have become of me if you had not been there to save him?” said the poor woman, with a shudder; then adding: “How could I have dared to appear before Monsieur de Belmont? This is our only child; and had he been drowned—drowned by my fault, because I had failed in watchfulness—oh! I should have become mad, I could not have survived the grief.”

“Do you hear that?” said the young man, caressing little George. “In future you must remember to obey your mother implicitly, if you wish her to live; and by so doing you will be agreeable to the Almighty, as well as please your parents.”

“But, madame,” continued he, in order to change the conversation, “have you no repugnance in coming to reside in our country? You may have been prejudiced against it.”

“I am going to rejoin my husband, from whom

I have been separated for some time," replied Madame de Belmont. " Besides, had I conceived any prejudices unfavourable to the Corsican character, they would have been dispelled for ever to-day."

" Oh ! we are not so black as we are painted," said Theobald with a smile ; " we know how to appreciate merit, and sympathize with all that is noble and good ; besides our beautiful landscapes, even our picturesque, though uncultivated lands, possess many charms."

" Uncultivated, do you say ? Not so uncultivated as I had imagined," replied Madame de Belmont, casting a glance on the fertile and verdant shores, which appeared to glide by the vessel like the slides of a magic lantern ; " those fields and vines seem, on the contrary, in excellent order."

" I must admit, madam, that Cape Corse is that part of the island which boasts the highest cultivation, and which is, consequently, the most productive ; the country people are also very industrious and the most civilized. But throughout the whole of Corsica you will find a prolific soil, a most agreeable climate, and certainly the most enchanting views it is possible to imagine. We have also magnificent forests, for example those of Vezzanova and Aïtona, in which there are trees one hundred feet high, and not less than eight feet in diameter, that grow up, wither, and die of old age, without ever having been touched by the axe of man. We also possess a great number of quarries of different kinds of marble, granite, porphyry, of vert antique, that can be worked and turned to the greatest advantage, when the roads, now in progress, are finished, which I hope will soon be the case."

“I am aware,” said Madame de Belmont, “that you can boast of mineral sources, whose waters possess the most admirable qualities. My husband, who suffered greatly last year from the effects of a wound, went to take the waters at Guagno, and derived the greatest benefit from their use.”

“There are also,” said Theobald, who took much pleasure in enumerating the advantages of his native land, “the waters of Petricola and of Orizza, besides the baths of Caldaniccia, superior in their mineral qualities, perhaps, even to those of Vichy. Crowds of invalids resort there every year from all parts of the island, and even from Italy. As if in contrast to the hot springs I have mentioned, there are others very curious from their icy coldness in all seasons; and no one passes on the road leading from Corte to Ajaccio, without visiting a fountain, the water of which is of the most wonderful limpidity, and in which it is impossible to pick up three pebbles one after another, the water is so intensely cold. I say nothing of our steep and rugged rocks, of our deep and shady grottoes, or our nearly impenetrable thickets; I abstain also from speaking of our fisheries, which are so abundantly supplied that the Neapolitans come expressly to cast their nets here; of the excellence of our fruits, and of the infinite variety of our provisions, for if you visit our country for any time, madam, you will find all the productions of the temperate zone, united to those peculiar to Africa; and you will admit that Providence has been most bountiful to us, and has accorded us a large share of its gifts.”

“I feel already convinced on that subject,” said the lady, delighted with Theobald’s good sense

and politeness, and above all with the courtesy and refinement of his manners. "Can you tell me what is that ruined building we are now approaching?"

"It is the tower in which Seneca was confined, or, at all events, that which we believe to have been the philosopher's prison during his long exile. The latter circumstance, no doubt, inspired the bitter feeling which pervades his satirical verses, and in which I think he has been too severe upon us."

"And those ruinous remains, apparently of towers, placed at equal distances from each other?"

"They were constructed to serve as a defence against the aggressions of Saracen pirates, whose descents on our island were formerly very frequent, and always followed by the most terrible misfortunes; now that the Corsicans have nothing more to dread from these miscreants, they allow the towers to fall into ruin."

"Oh! what a lovely day," said Madame de Belmont, whose indisposition had been entirely cured by the shock of the accident, together with the proximity of the coast. "How pure the air! how calm the waters! It is impossible for me to describe the happiness and delight I feel at this moment. I hold my darling boy on my knees, and I am going to rejoin his father, to you I owe all this unutterable happiness, Monsieur Loncini."

"Say rather you owe it to the Almighty, madam," said Theobald, in a grave but soft voice, "for from Him alone all happiness, all good gifts proceed."

Madame de Belmont looked at him surprised,

and charmed at the same time, to find a young man so imbued with religious feeling.

“ You are a good and noble youth,” said she with much emotion; “ may my son resemble you ! ”

“ You will really make me blush,” said Theobald, laughing. “ I naturally prefer giving you some account of the beautiful objects that surround us, to exposing my utter ignorance of all the ways of the world; will you, then, like to know the name of that mass of rock, covered with stunted shrubs, that we are now so rapidly approaching? It is the island of Capraja, or the Goat Island, which certainly contains many more goats than men, for these rugged and precipitous sites appear purposely made for such inhabitants. And do you see somewhat further, a smiling fertile land, where iron mines are successfully worked, and to which Napoleon, in his inconceivable activity, gave excellent roads during his short reign in the small island? Those roads constitute its present prosperity.”

“ That is, indeed, a great name you invoke,” said Madame de Belmont. “ You Corsicans must love your great Napoleon Buonaparte ! ”

“ We are proud of him,” replied Theobald, “ though he did not do all for his country that his countrymen had a right to expect. He forgot his own land for his adopted country, but very possibly he could not have acted otherwise; his mind was always teeming with such vast projects that he had no time to further the interests of Corsica.”

“ Is not that an island which I perceive in the distance ? ” asked Madame de Belmont, who was rather near-sighted.

“ It is the island of Monte Christo, more barren still than Capraija, and completely uninhabited. At one time, some holy men had the courage to settle in that absolute solitude. They built a convent, and with infinite labour, and unceasing toil, at length brought a few acres of land into cultivation, sufficient to supply their very moderate wants. Unhappily, however, the Saracens disembarked one day on the island, pursued and massacred them all in their little chapel ; they died like martyrs, imploring God to pardon their murderers. The Saracens then seized on the ornaments and the sacred vessels of the church, the only riches belonging to these poor friars. A number of goats escaped and fled to the woods, where they have since multiplied incredibly, and are now the only living creatures on the island that formerly echoed to the praises of God ! Occasionally, some Italian sportsmen disembark on this barren shore, pursue the goats, and kill a great number ; then depart, carrying away the skins. Monte Christo, as well as the island of Capraija, belongs to Tuscany.”

At this time Casanova and some of the passengers took seats close to Madame de Belmont and Theobald, and the conversation became general, running on a hundred different subjects. Theobald played with little George, whom he had enticed on to his knee, when Madame de Belmont, turning towards him, said with a gracious smile : “ Monsieur Loncini, as you appear to know everything, can you tell me the name of that pretty chapel so close to the sea-shore ? ”

“ It is, madam, the chapel of the Madonna della Vesina,” replied Theobald, in a low and

gloomy voice, for the painful remembrance of his dying mother instantly presented itself to his mind. He placed the child in its mother's arms and suddenly left the party.

“Good heavens! what can have happened to Monsieur Loncini that he leaves us in this manner?” exclaimed the lady, almost uneasy at his hasty departure.

“His mother unfortunately died there,” said Casanova, pointing to a miserable hovel, which at the same moment lay bathed in the sun’s rays. “She died of fatigue and grief, and the young man is returning to Corsica for the purpose of avenging the death of his father and mother; for Loncini is an excellent young fellow, as you may have observed.”

“Revenge their death! But how?” asked Madame de Belmont.

“He will retaliate in the same manner, of course,” pursued Casanova, with a gesture significant of taking aim with a gun. “Blood cries out for blood, and Loncini is an excellent shot; in fact, he shoots they say as well as he swims.”

“What! so good a young man become a murderer? Impossible!” cried Madame de Belmont.

“If Loncini does not revenge his parents’ death he will be a dishonoured man, and his dishonour will fall on his whole family.”

“But what you say is dreadful, horrible, monsieur. I cannot imagine that this young man, so mild, so pious, so well-educated, should ever bathe his hands in human blood. Oh, never! it is impossible!”

“You do not know us yet!” exclaimed Casanova, in a tone, and with an air of triumph. “We mountaineers, at least, can boast that we are men.”

Here the voice of the captain put an end to further conversation,—“Ladies and gentlemen, be good enough to claim your luggage. Here we are at the end of our voyage.”

And Bastia presented itself to the view of the passengers, by its most imposing quarter, the square of St. Nicholas, the Palais de Justice, all the new and modern houses, in fact, like the shopkeepers who place their goods in view, with the hope of attracting customers.

Le Liamone was already entering the harbour when Theobald rejoined Madame de Belmont. He offered his services in landing, which is very inconvenient, and effected by means of a boat, the steamer being unable to reach the quay. A short time devoted to prayer and reflection had sufficed to restore our hero to his usual state of tranquillity, and it was with great politeness and kindness of manner that he paid Madame de Belmont all those attentions so welcome to a lady, and which she could so well appreciate.

“Monsieur,” said she, on leaving him at the door of the Hotel Tellier, the best in the town, “if ever my husband or myself should be so fortunate as to have it in our power to be useful to you, think of us as real friends, and never forget the deep and heartfelt gratitude which we shall ever retain towards you.”

CHAPTER III.

THE BANDIT.

THE Signor Cafarelli was on the quay waiting for Theobald. As soon as the latter perceived this faithful friend, he ran forward and embraced him with affection.

“Come, my son,” said the old man; “your room is prepared, and we are all impatience to receive you.”

Madame and Mademoiselle Cafarelli gave him a most cordial and graceful welcome. Our hero would greatly have preferred going at once to the chapel of the Madonna della Vesina, to visit the tomb of his mother, but his friends would not permit him. At daybreak the next morning Theobald commenced his pilgrimage. Signor Cafarelli insisted on accompanying him. They proceeded in silence and meditation; but in passing the hotel formerly occupied by the baroness D—, Theobald could not repress a sigh, when he thought that probably on earth he never more would see her who had been a ministering angel to his mother, and a bright and shining light for himself and Clarita, and whose benign influence he felt daily more and more.

“We shall ever regret the loss of that excellent woman,” said the signor, who understood the

natural feeling of his young friend. "She did so much good in the country."

When Theobald left the churchyard, after praying long on his mother's tomb, he said to the signor: "I much wish that my mother's remains should repose with those of my father in the family vault; be so kind, my dear sir, as to take the necessary steps for their removal."

The old gentleman promised to do so. After a long silence,—"My son," said he, at length, "you will soon find yourself in a very difficult position. Allow me to advise you to act with much prudence. Annunciata is an active and most courageous woman; but I fear she will not prove a good adviser for you. Tell her to have patience, and do not act precipitately. Your enemies are cunning and crafty, and will be on their guard."

"If you would speak of the Fabianos I will at once clearly explain my intentions towards them to you, above all, for you are a man of sense, and able to understand my feelings. Whether they are or are not guilty of my father's death, they have been acquitted by a jury of their countrymen, and I am bound to consider them innocent: it is to Him alone who searches all hearts to judge them now; it is to Him alone that vengeance belongs, if they deserve punishment. As to me, they have nothing to fear, and I declare to you I never will raise my hand to do them the least harm."

"Alas!" replied the signor, who had listened with great attention to the words of his companion; "make no rash promises, my young friend. Your sentiments are, doubtless, most laudable, and although a true Corsican myself, I approve them

from the bottom of my heart : but you have forgotten your country, my son. Were you going to reside in Bastia, your feelings might find some sympathy, but, great heaven ! think on Piovela ! oh ! you do not know of what such a race of men is capable. Do you remember little Buonavita ? You saw him at my house. At that time he was between sixteen and seventeen years of age. He also had been educated on the continent, and had acquired much useful knowledge, with new manners and feelings. Well, he returned to his native mountains, and some time after he received an insult which he did not immediately revenge. There was but one opinion, one cry, on what was termed his effeminate manners, in other words, his cowardice. From all he received the *rimbecco*, or Corsican reproach, for having borne an injury without instantly revenging it, upon which he sent a challenge to his adversary, who laughed at it, duelling being unknown amongst us. Civilization strove for some time with prejudice, but the latter was victorious, and Buonavita is now in the thicket, having killed his man."

" Prejudice may have conquered civilization," replied Theobald ; " but religion will triumph over prejudice at last."

" I hope so, too," said Monsieur Cafarelli, with a doubtful air, and he then changed the conversation.

Towards evening, a shepherd sent by his aunt arrived with a horse to take Theobald to Piovela ; and the following morning, at daybreak, he took leave of the hospitable family of Cafarelli, promising to revisit them shortly. He was an excellent horseman, accustomed from childhood to ride, but still was frequently obliged to dismount and

to take great care of himself and horse, so dangerous and difficult was the way taken by his guide, the shepherd. This was caused by the man having chosen the upper path, which led among rocks and precipices, in order to avoid passing the tree marked with the fatal stain of poor Antonio Loncini's blood, for this day of Theobald's return was to be one of unmitigated joy. The guide, then, led the way on horseback, followed by his dog, and with his gun on his shoulder. About mid-day they reached the door of a miserable hovel, entirely constructed with the branches of trees, in the very thickest part of the wood. The shepherd then whistled in a peculiar manner, upon which, a man, armed to the teeth, issued forth, and advanced to Theobald, after having carefully double locked the door, a very extraordinary precaution in a country where the houses are only secured by a latch, and have no locks or fastenings, except in the case of the owner being in "Vendetta."

"You are truly welcome, Signor Loncini. Do you not remember your old friend Burcica, to whom you have so often brought powder at the Red Cross, and who used to trot you on his horse when you were a little boy? How tall you are, how robust you have grown. It is a pleasure to see you. May God preserve you, signor!"

Theobald had recognized the bandit, but this meeting was by no means agreeable to him, and he felt displeased with the shepherd for having arranged it. However, he put on a good countenance, and shook the hand Burcica offered, for he remembered the man had always been ready to render a service to his family.

"Come and refresh yourself," said he, con-

ducting the young man towards a large block of marble, on which a supply of provisions were spread, consisting of black bread, raw onions, a goat's milk cheese, and a quarter of venison, cooked under the hot cinders. Burcica then brought a bottle of wine from the mysterious cabin, and presented it to his guests.

Theobald was greatly inclined to refuse this rural repast, but having ridden since daylight, he was extremely hungry, besides, he also feared to offend the well-known susceptibility of the Signor Burcica. However, the late pupil of the Abbé Duhamel, felt far from comfortable in this strange company.

The bandit, on the contrary, was overjoyed at the return of Theobald, and asked him numberless questions, interrogating him on all he had seen and even learnt. The young man replied at first with much reserve, but Burcica spoke of his father Antonio, with whom he had been very intimate; of Annunciata, that woman of energy; of Clarita, whom he named the good angel of Piovela; and Theobald became more communicative.

“Are you not tired of this wandering life, so completely out of all social law, that you have been leading so long?”

The question was hazarded from a desire to make his interview with Burcica useful to him, by suggesting wholesome reflection.

The bandit paused before he replied.

“You are aware what has made me lead the life I do,” he replied, at length. “I was either obliged to suffer a long imprisonment, or make up my mind to embrace my present existence. *I could not hesitate, for I love the open air and*

my liberty before all things. Here I am absolute master. The thicket is my kingdom. My subjects are all those who require my services, or who fear my stiletto, and they form a large class. I raise contributions wherever I please ; and no one has ever refused the supply of powder and shot necessary for my use—indeed, they anticipate my wishes ; and I should never want money if I accepted but one half of that offered me.”

“ But are you not in constant dread of the Corsican voltigeurs, who are always on the look out for you ? ” asked Theobald.

“ I laugh at them, and at the *gendarmes* as well. They are not sufficiently sharp to catch me. I sleep sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, as it suits me. To-day I am here, to-morrow I shall be fifteen leagues off in some other thicket, or on some impregnable peak. How, then, can they take me ? Besides, do not my kind friends apprise me continually of their marches and countermarches ; and have I not my faithful dog, who knows and can wind their footsteps at a league’s distance ? ”

“ But this isolated existence— ”

“ Isolated !—not quite so isolated as you appear to imagine, particularly just now,” interrupted Burcica, smiling maliciously, and casting a glance towards the hovel. “ However, to speak the truth, there are moments when I feel tired of all these advantages ; and I think in three years, when my time of outlawry is expired, I shall make an end of it. I shall marry, and return to my former existence.”

“ I strongly advise you to do so, and wish you well with all my heart,” replied Theobald.

“ And for what reason ? ” asked Burcica. “ I

only war against bad people, and am always ready to serve my friends whenever it is in my power to do so. But what you say deserves reflection," added he, in a grave tone, "and I will think seriously upon it when I have time."

The meal being now finished, Theobald and his guide prepared to continue their way, for they wished to arrive at Piovela in the evening.

Burcica insisted on accompanying them to the end of the ravine, at the commencement of which they now were. But before commencing his march, he returned to the hovel, and Theobald, looking through the foliage, thought he perceived another individual, clothed and armed precisely as the Signor Burcica. These two men exchanged a few words in a low voice, and Burcica rejoined Theobald, followed by an enormous dog. The latter asked him no questions, well knowing that the Corsicans, although so curious, dislike to be questioned on what concerns them personally. Nevertheless, he could not repress a movement of curiosity, very natural under the circumstances, when he thought of the hovel so scrupulously locked: but he repressed the feeling, as he could not harbour any distrust or suspicion. Burcica was an old friend of his family, and he knew of no solitary example whatever in which a Corsican had ever betrayed a friendship. The young man then turned the conversation on far more useful subjects. He painted the happiness of a regular and Christian life, with the charms of family love. The bandit appeared to listen with real pleasure. When they emerged from the wood, they took leave of each other.

"Adieu, Signor Loncini, till our next meeting," said the bandit. "Whenever you want me, only

let me know ; my arm and carabine have never failed the Loncinis."

"Thank you sincerely for your offer," said the youth ; "but I trust that I may never need them."⁴

"Do not be too sure," pursued Burcica, mis-understanding the sense of Theobald's reply. "You have truly become a very fine young man, and are quite capable of arranging your own affairs without aid ; but no one knows what may happen. And it is always well, believe me, to have a friend in the thicket. Look at poor Monecco and little Marietta. Where would they be without us at this moment ? But I forget—you do not know this story. You shall hear it now, at least as far as it has gone. I remember that, when only so high, your discretion was proof against everything. Did you not remark the citadel we passed ?"

"What citadel ?" asked Theobald, beginning to think it was a question of the mysterious hovel.

"Oh, a stronghold of my manufacture, with a strong oaken door, and a good lock and key, which latter never leaves my pocket. It contains a Parisian dandy—a lion, as they are now called in the town. This exquisite, who appears, after all, a good fellow enough, had a place in the custom-house here in Corsica. He was at Cervione for some months, and became acquainted with Marietta in a house where she used to pass her Sunday evenings. He promised to marry the young girl, and the father, Monecco, willingly gave his consent. The young man then said he would write for the necessary papers to be forwarded ; but weeks and even months passed, and

no papers were forthcoming. Monecco began to suspect all was not right, and set a spy to watch his future son-in-law, who discovered that the young man had effected a change of residence, and was going to be transferred to Nantes, in France, preparing to depart without beat of drum. In his fury Monecco thought of using his stiletto; but Marietta implored him so pitifully, that her father was moved, and changed his tactics. He confided his plans to me, and I made them my business. At the moment that the faithless custom-house officer was escaping in the most secret manner from the town, one of my companions and I were waiting for him on the high road—for the continentals, you know, never risk going through the thicket unless well accompanied. Hardly had my fine fellow proceeded half a league, when we fell upon him like two vultures. The poor youth made no more resistance than a lamb going to the slaughter. We conducted him to the citadel, which had been constructed expressly for him, and we said, 'Now, young man, hark ye, you will not leave this place until well and legally married.' This time the papers were not so long in coming. At the expiration of three weeks they arrived in due form; and this very night the *adjoint* of the mayor of Cervione will marry him to the pretty Marietta here in the wood. Indeed, I expect her to arrive almost immediately, with her father; and Monsieur Valery may then leave for the continent if he wishes to do so, for we shall not offer him the least impediment."*

* However incredible this anecdote may appear, it is perfectly true in all its details.

“ But you have acted against all right and law,” cried Theobald, stupefied by the account.

“ How so ? ” inquired the bandit. “ Are we, then, to allow our young girls to be dishonoured with impunity, and to suffer them to be amused by promises in the air, and say nothing ? We should, indeed, see fine things, if all these fops from the continent were allowed to make love, promise marriage, and then be off.”

“ But to seize a man violently on the high road, against all law or right, and keep him a close prisoner for three weeks ! ”

“ Bah, bah ! he is not so much to be pitied as you may imagine,” interrupted Burcica. “ We have done him no kind of harm. On the contrary, he has been well housed and well fed. The fellow has eaten during these three weeks more meat than would feed a Corsican for six months, to say nothing of upwards of thirty bottles of good old wine, which he no doubt imbibed for the purpose of drowning his sorrow ! Every evening we make him take a sentimental walk by moonlight, between one of my comrades and myself, as it might enter his head to give us the slip.”

“ But can you for a moment imagine that such a marriage will ever prove happy ? ” pursued Theobald.

“ That is no business of ours—Marietta’s reputation was compromised by the fellow’s jilting her, and the honour of Monecco, her father, as well ; both will now be repaired, that is the principal point. Besides, the young girl is pretty, the father gives her a trousseau and 2,000 francs for her marriage portion ; she is, therefore, one of the best matches in the town, so you see the exquisite is by no means to be pitied. No doubt he is very

glad at the bottom, that we have obliged him to marry, and I assure you, there are very many young men who would give a great deal to be in his place."

"That has nothing to do with the matter," said Theobald. "All this appears to me so strange, so out of all social order and the rules of civilization, that I cannot think you have done well."

"Ah ! Theobald, you have forgotten your country ; but you will soon renew your acquaintance with it, I hope. But I must leave you, for my friend in the citadel must be tired by this time of mounting guard all alone. Should you want me, put a slip of paper in the hiding-place of the red cross, by the "macchio" of Pepe Loncini; or this is even better," said the bandit, taking a coin from his pocket, with the effigy of King Theodore. "Your father gave it me ; there are not many left now in the island."

Theobald mechanically took the piece of money, and continued his journey, a prey to a thousand strange thoughts.

The words, "you have forgotten your country," addressed to him the day before by Cafarelli and now repeated by the bandit, recurred to his mind, and he felt obliged to admit the truth of the observation. All that he had just seen and heard so completely overthrew the ideas inculcated by his education on the continent, that he began to ask himself if he had not presumed too much on his own strength, in promising to shake off, without compunction, all prejudices of his country irreconcilable with the rules of religion and honour. He felt at this moment that it would require much strength of soul to triumph over the obstacles which he foresaw, vaguely and confusedly,

in the distance, would inevitably oppose themselves to the accomplishment of his good resolutions ; he saw and felt that to conquer he must receive assistance from above, and devoutly offered a prayer, beseeching the Almighty to endue him with strength to persevere in the paths of virtue and Christian charity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN HOME.

THE sun was already descending behind the mountains, and Theobald continued to advance, his head bent down and his mind entirely occupied by serious reflection ; fortunately, his horse was as sure of foot as the goats of Niolo, for the young man, absorbed by his various thoughts, let the reins fall on the animal's neck, and relied on his instinct to conduct him safely in the perilous ascents and descents which constantly occurred. Suddenly the report of at least twenty guns startled him, his horse bounded backwards, at the risk of dismounting his rider, and Theobald beheld twenty shepherds advancing to meet him, and in the act of reloading their arms. By an instinctive movement, the young man sought for his stiletto, forgetting that on leaving Paris he had given it as a keepsake to one of his dearest friends ; he was, however, immediately reassured by seeing a lady galloping towards him, whom he instantly recognized.

“ Theobald ! my dear nephew, you are here at last ! returned to live with us ! How we have sighed for this moment,” said Annunciata.

“ Not more ardently than myself, I can assure you, my dear aunt,” replied Theobald, dismounting

to assist her; but more active still, Annunciata had already jumped lightly from her horse, and was close to him. At this time she was thirty years of age, and in spite of the heat of the climate, which usually fades the beauty of the women while young, Annunciata had preserved all the lustre and brightness of hers. Her fine features were animated by the joy of Theobald's return, and her eyes, already so expressive, appeared more brilliant than ever; still a few lines on the ivory forehead, a marked frown, and a disdainful expression about the mouth, clearly denoted to an observant eye the ravages of passion on this regularly handsome face. She looked long with admiration on her nephew.

"How tall and strong you have become!" said she exultingly; "you will, I trust, be a worthy head to our family! Oh! woe and misfortune to the family of the Fox," added she with enthusiasm; "for they would have devoured the harmless lamb, and the lamb is now changed to a lion!"

Theobald frowned, for he had not forgotten that the father of the Fabianos had formerly been surnamed the "Fox," in consequence of his character for cunning and craftiness, and the metaphor was by no means to his taste. "How are my grandmother and Clarita?" he hastened to inquire.

"You will see them both presently. Do you not remember this neighbourhood, Theobald? We are but a quarter of a league from the village." All this time the shepherds continued to fire in token of rejoicing.

"Come and thank these good people, my nephew," said Annunciata—"they are all devoted

to us, and," added she in a low voice, "you may depend upon them all, when an occasion offers." Theobald left his aunt without reply, and advanced to the country people, bowing and offering his hand, which they all pressed heartily.

"Let us remount," said Annunciata, "for you are awaited with impatience at home. But what do I see? You are entirely without arms; how is this, my nephew? Are you a young lady, that you fear the weight of a rifle; or can it be that you do not know how to use it?"

Theobald's self-love was wounded to the quick. "Lend me your gun for a few moments," said he to the man that had served him as guide. Now the young man's principal recreation, while studying for the law, had been shooting at a mark in a gallery formed for the purpose, and he had become an admirable shot. After having satisfied himself that the shepherd's gun was in good order, he was going to aim at the highest branch of a chestnut tree at a great distance, but at the same moment he perceived a bird of prey, soaring in the air at a prodigious height—so high that it appeared to be a black speck in the midst of space. "I will aim at this vulture," cried Theobald. The gun went off—the bird was motionless for an instant, then they beheld him fall to the earth, turning over and over, a shapeless mass—it was dead.

"Bravo, bravissimo, signor," cried all the shepherds with the greatest enthusiasm. Annunciata said nothing, but she embraced her nephew with impassioned tenderness; and the cruel, ferocious joy that beamed from her eyes made Theobald regret having given way to the vain desire of exhibiting his skill.

" You see, my dear aunt, I shall not let you want game during the season," said he, affecting a light tone.

" Nor game of a higher description, I hope and trust," replied Annunciata, with the smile of a demon.

" Let us proceed," cried the youth, " we have already lost too much time;" and he pressed his horse to a gallop, hoping to shake off the disagreeable impression caused by his aunt's words, for so many contending emotions agitated him violently. It was joy, above all things, to return to his country, his relatives, his countrymen ; but all these sentiments were mixed with a painful feeling, which he could not exactly define. Annunciata quickly rejoined him, and he would willingly have left her side, had it been possible ; for he felt instinctively that this woman, however engaging she might be, was like an evil genius attached to his footsteps. Impossible, however, to avoid her at this time, the proud Amazon placed herself at her nephew's side, at the head of the procession, intimating to each person the place they were to occupy. As soon as the houses of Piovela became visible, the firing of the shepherds recommenced with redoubled ardour, and attracted all the inhabitants to the doors and windows. This kind of ovation did not please Theobald, who would greatly have preferred gaining his home quietly, after so long an absence. Annunciata, on the contrary, appeared to triumph in it ; she made her horse curvet, and saluted, either with a wave of her hand, or her voice, every one of her acquaintance. On proceeding up the principal street, the young man perceived the house belonging to the Fabianos ; it was entirely shut up ; indeed it might

have been taken for a state prison, so abundantly was it provided with iron bars and locks. As they passed it, the firing became furious, and the demonstrations of joy changed almost to imprecations and threats. Theobald was on thorns.

“Annunciata,” cried he to his aunt, “for the love of heaven, put an end to this.”

“My friends,” said she to the shepherds, “the time is not yet come for showing your loyalty. Be moderate.”

“At length the turrets of the old manor of the Loncinis became visible to Theobald’s longing view; it was situated in an open square at the extreme end of the village; his heart beat quickly, but his countenance was gloomy and overcast, for the scene in which he had so unwillingly played the principal part afflicted him deeply. From the door of his birthplace a fair young girl advanced to meet him; she was dressed in white, as if for a great fête, and appeared full of joy, which her natural timidity kept in check.

Theobald ran to embrace his sister Clarita. She was, indeed, the gentle, modest girl he had pictured to himself, and that he had desired she should be. But her youthful features were far from possessing the brilliant and sparkling beauty of Annunciata. Clarita, at this time, was not seventeen years of age. She had golden-coloured hair, with a beautiful and transparent complexion; her eyes were as blue as the azure above, but her crimson lips were, perhaps, rather too thick, and her features did not present sufficient regularity to make her a beauty; and yet it was impossible to look at her without delight, there was such an inexpressible charm of innocence and modesty in the somewhat melancholy expression of her features.

The beauty and purity of her mind shone (it may be said) in her sweet countenance. Theobald tenderly strained her to his heart. She had been the companion of his infancy, and was the living image of the mother he had lost; then, while Annunciata busied herself in giving refreshments to the shepherds, the brother and sister paid a visit to their great-grandmother.

Madame Loncini was at this time upwards of ninety years of age. She had seen, first, her brother-in-law, then her husband, and afterwards her grandson Antonio, all fall by violent deaths; and so many successive shocks had weakened her understanding and impaired her reason, so that she had no will or energy left. Annunciata alone was the head of the house, and directed the affairs; in fact, since her brother's death, she was the mistress; but Clarita was the consoling angel, attentive and assiduous to the old lady; she alone rendered those services that poor Madame Loncini's position required; she led her to church, read aloud books of piety, or tried to amuse her by singing sacred songs. It was, indeed, an affecting sight to see this gentle girl lavish upon her aged relative all the tender cares a mother bestows on a beloved child.

"Here is your son Theobald, who has returned home," said Clarita, in her soft voice; "give him your blessing, good mother."

Madame Loncini was seated in a large cushioned arm-chair, with her face turned to the door. At sight of the young man, a gleam of joy illuminated her countenance; she did not rise from her seat, but stretching out her withered hand,—

"May the God of all mercies shower his graces and blessings on this, the last of the Loncinis,"

said she ; “ may he be happier than his forefathers, and live to a good old age.”

Theobald bent his head under the hand of his venerable relative, then taking the one she offered him, he kissed it respectfully.

The old lady’s eyes became full of tears.

Clarita approached her, and showing Theobald, “ My brother is one more to love you,” she whispered. “ Oh, thank Heaven for this happy day !”

“ Who says this is a happy day ?” asked the old woman, already wandering. “ Was not the mass for the dead celebrated this morning ? Yes, to-day is the fiftieth anniversary of that horrible catastrophe. My son, you should have returned either before, or after, this day, for it is a day of blood and woe ; it is unlucky !”

“ Oh ! do not talk in this manner, good mother,” said Clarita, in tears. “ But why, my brother, why did you not return last week, as we all three hoped and expected ?”

“ You know it was out of my power to do so ; but pray, my dearest Clarita, do not be so superstitious.”

“ I am wrong, no doubt,” said the young girl, trying to smile through her tears. “ I can only love ; I have no strength of mind.”

“ You must endeavour to acquire it,” said her brother, desirous of immediately commencing his part of instructor. “ I know that a great number of Corsican women believe in the influence of lucky and unlucky days, in fascination, in the evil eye, and in many similar things ; all this is absurd, and condemned by the church, as well as by reason.”

“ I will try to correct myself,” said Clarita, with

charming docility ; then leaning towards her great-grandmother, she caressed her, in order to dissipate the painful impression still visible on her features. She soon succeeded in her pious task, and the good old lady, quite consoled, smiled on the young girl. Theobald admired this scene in silence, and asked himself if all the science with which he proposed to endow his sister could be compared to the modesty and tenderness which already made her so attractive. At this time, Annunciata entered the dining-room, for the purpose of laying the cloth for dinner, and Clarita immediately rose to assist her aunt. She then gave her arm to the old lady, and conducted her to her usual seat, sitting next to her, and was entirely engrossed in paying those attentions which her grandmother's infirmities required. Theobald was compelled to occupy the seat of honour, which his aunt pointed out to him. As to her, she came and went, assisting the servants in changing the plates, and only sat down at intervals at the further end of the table. In vain, Theobald, accustomed to French manners, cried out against the barbarism of those of Corsica ; nothing on earth would induce Annunciata to change hers.

“ My mother, my grandmother, and their mothers before them, waited on the head of the family while at table, and I will do the same,” was her invariable reply to all the observations and entreaties of her nephew. The repast was plain and simple, as is the usual fare in Corsica, and consisted, first, of *polenta*, to which was added *ravioles* (a kind of Italian ragout), with a small wild kid roasted. At the dessert, Clarita rose to fetch the *broccio*, and the galettes which she had herself prepared. A bottle of good old wine cir-

culated, and conversation commenced. Theobald had much to relate, and the three women listened with the deepest interest. At length, nine o'clock struck by a large wooden clock which stood in a corner of the room. Clarita instantly rose, and wishing her brother good night, presented her arm to Madame Loncini, and led her to her apartment.

“My grandmother always retires at nine o'clock,” said Annunciata, “and your sister does not leave her during the whole night. We are, then, certain of being alone, and I will take advantage of the circumstance to speak on a subject which interests us all, but which regards you more particularly. Clarita has already passed her sixteenth year some months, it is therefore time to think of marrying her.”

“It appears to me very early for her to take so serious a step,” hazarded Theobald.

“It is not considered too soon in our country,” pursued Annunciata, “particularly when we consider that you are in great want of some useful alliance. I have long been occupied on this matter, but there is no suitable match for her in Piovela. Our family being descended from the Caporellis, and being one of the oldest on the island, we cannot lower ourselves. I have, then, been compelled to search in the neighbourhood. Signor Peroncelli, of whom you have, of course, heard, descends from a second-rate nobility. He has three sons, the eldest being now twenty-three years of age. You will find him, I venture to say, exactly what we wish; for, without speaking of his brothers, who will soon be men, he has a sister married to a captain in the Corsican voltigeurs, which of itself would be an immense

advantage to you in case of need; besides four cousins—all fighting men—three uncles on the father's side, and at least two dozen cousins sprung from the first cousins, of whom the greater portion are already men."

"But, my dear aunt," interrupted the young man, "I really do not see how this multitude of uncles and cousins, which you enumerate with so much complacency, can further the happiness of Clarita."

Annunciata looked at her nephew in astonishment. "You have forgotten your country," said she at length, in a gloomy tone.

"I suppose that such must be the case," replied Theobald, provoked; "for you are the third person who has told me the same thing since my return."

"Act as you think proper," pursued Annunciata with bitterness; "but for my conscience' sake, I shall tell you, that if you refuse to profit by this opportunity of settling your sister in a suitable manner, I feel certain you will very shortly have reason to repent your folly."

"I refuse nothing," replied her young relative. "The happiness of Clarita is my daily hope and desire; and if I find that the son of Signor Peroncelli possesses the necessary qualities —"

"There exists a point of far more importance than the happiness of a woman," interposed Annunciata with asperity, "and that is, the honour of our family. In accordance with this principle, my nephew, I had begun to enumerate the resources which you personally would derive from this alliance. If you will allow me, I will continue to inform you of all I know respecting the Peroncellis."

"I am all attention," replied Theobald coldly, for he felt himself altogether misunderstood.

"Francisco Peroncelli has pursued his studies on the continent. He is a good young man, full of right feeling and courage, and one of whom every one speaks most highly. As he is the eldest of the sons, he will inherit the landed property, which is considerable. This, I need not tell you, is the Corsican custom."

"Is Clarita disposed to receive his addresses? Is she gratified by his attentions?" asked Theobald.

"Clarita has never seen him, and does not know one word of what I have just told you. But she is well educated, and can have no will but yours, as you stand in the place of her father. The Signor Peroncelli is enchanted with the idea of this alliance between our families. He is, besides, aware that my niece possesses ten thousand francs, which she inherits from her mother, and he would not find so good a marriage portion within ten leagues around."

"Yes, without reckoning on what I can do for her," said the young man with pride.

"That is quite another affair; and I should advise you not to be too liberal, for the head of our family should be in a position to uphold his rank," continued Annunciata. "But listen to the rest I have to tell you. Francisco must return to the continent to finish his studies. He would already have left several weeks ago, had not his father wished to present him to you before his departure, for, of course, we could decide on nothing during your absence. It would, therefore, be fit and proper that you should go and see Signor Peroncelli as soon as possible, in order to make all necessary arrangements."

“Would it not be better to wait for him to pay us the first visit?” asked Theobald.

“No, no—we have already talked the matter over between ourselves,” said his aunt. “Allow yourself to be guided by me on all subjects of decorum at least, such as they were practised by our ancestors—for I, thank God, have forgotten none of them. And now I will leave you, for you must require rest.”

“I promise you to think seriously on the conversation we have just had,” said Theobald with gravity, for he felt by no means decided.

“You will act wisely,” replied his aunt, “for the subject well deserves consideration. This is your room. Good-bye till to-morrow. I have many more matters to tell you, but opportunities will not be wanting, now you have returned home.”

CHAPTER V.

THE PERONCELLI FAMILY.

ALTHOUGH Theobald had ridden fifteen leagues over the most abominable roads, his mind was so agitated he felt no inclination to sleep, but a great want of solitude and quiet, to collect his thoughts and reflect calmly on his present position. For a young man of twenty years of age, having just left the benches of a college, and entirely without experience, he had, by no means, an easy part to play. He found himself suddenly called upon to fill the duties of the head of the family, as Annunciata delighted to call him ; the possessor of considerable property, the inhabitant of a country whose manners and customs are altogether peculiar, and which he had totally forgotten. To live among people who expected, as an act of positive duty, the commission of a crime utterly contrary to his conscience, both as a Christian and a man of honour ; and who, moreover, found himself the sole arbitrator of his sister's destiny, whom it was a question of settling in life. The young man recalled to his mind all the information his aunt had given him on this most important subject, eighing maturely the advantages and disadvantages ; he then implored the Almighty to enlighten

him and lead him to act for the best. To go himself to Vescovato and judge as far as possible of the character and good qualities of Francesco Peroncelli, and then to consult the wishes of his sister, appeared to be the wisest plan he could adopt ; he decided on doing so, and sank to sleep, thinking of the best means of putting his scheme into execution. The sun had long risen when Theobald awoke ; he rose instantly, and opening the window, the first object that met his view was Clarita returning home, and entering the house, followed by a servant carrying a basket. He ran to meet her.

“Where do you come from so early in the morning ?” asked he, kindly drawing her gently towards the garden.

“From a house close by, my dear brother.”

“And what took you there so early ?” again inquired our hero.

“Do you remember old Cati, who is nearly as old as our great-grandmother ?” replied the young girl blushing ; she is very poor, and has no relations left, so I have made it a duty to go and see her every morning ; I hope, Theobald, you will not forbid my continuing to visit her.”

“Certainly not ; I shall never forbid anything noble or generous.” So taking Clarita’s arm under his own, they were soon out of sight under a grove of lemon trees. The brother and sister walked thus for a long time, finding a great charm in this intimate chat, and Theobald was much struck by the good sense and proper feeling, the delicate sentiments of his young sister, whose education had been so defective. In truth, she possessed one of those happy natures who appear created for good ; her heart was the good ground

of which the Gospel speaks, and in which the word of God fructifies without hinderance ; Clarita had received the good seed at the time of her first communion, and it had produced an hundredfold. Brought up in absolute retirement, knowing no other pleasure than that we all derive from the accomplishment of a great duty ; entirely devoted to the task of consoling and cheering the old age of her great-grandmother, Clarita felt completely rewarded by the great affection of Madame Loncini, and thought it quite natural and a matter of course that she should devote her whole existence to the old lady. All her time had hitherto been taken up by household duties, the perusal of useful and pious books given to her by the baroness, the correspondence she had kept up with her brother, the charities she distributed to the poor of the village, and in various kinds of needlework which she had been taught during her stay in Bastia. Clarita had no particular intimacy with any of the young girls of Piovela ; and yet all loved her for her virtues and gentleness. Her only wish had been for her brother's return ; and now that that wish had been happily accomplished, nothing appeared wanting to her perfect felicity. The morning walk was interrupted by the church bell, which announced the nine o'clock mass.

“The mass will shortly commence, and my good mother and I always attend it ; I must go to fetch her. Will you accompany us, Theobald ?”

“Most willingly, my dear sister,” said he ; and both hand in hand, as in the days of their happy childhood, they went to seek Madame Loncini.

On his return from church, where Theobald could not but admire the fervour and piety of the

young girl, they found Annunciata waiting for them at the open door.

"I have been looking everywhere for you," said she to her nephew, "for we have many affairs to settle."

"I am entirely at your orders," was his reply.

Annunciata then led him into her room, and placing several files of paper before him on the table, "While you were absent," said she, "I endeavoured to replace you as far and as well as I could; but now it is for you to undertake the management of your own affairs. I have gathered all these documents for your inspection, examine them well, and I hope you will be satisfied."

"My dear aunt," said Theobald, "I am perfectly satisfied with your management; I rely entirely on you, and will receive no accounts whatever; I only entreat you to continue to direct everything as heretofore, for you are far more capable than I can be."

"No, no," replied Annunciata, "that cannot be; we have each our part to perform. Men are the natural masters, and everything out of the house regards them; while we women undertake the housekeeping and internal economy. Read all these papers, I beg, that you may at least be familiar with the state of affairs."

"Who then, may I ask, has made out these accounts?" asked Theobald, surprised at their neatness, for he remembered that when he left, his aunt could neither read nor write.

"They are all made out by me," replied Annunciata. "I could not write, but it became necessary for me to learn. Clarita gave me lessons, and it only required three months' application to enable me to write sufficiently well for the pur-

pose. But you appear surprised. Do you not know the Corsicans are superior to the generality of men, and consequently of women? That they can, with facility, do all they desire?" added she proudly.

Theobald could not forbear smiling at this comfortable conviction, which he knew was shared by the great majority of his countrymen.

He rapidly glanced over all the different accounts, but one large bundle of papers particularly fixed his attention; it turned out to be the different documents of a lawsuit, which Annunciata had carried on, with a neighbouring proprietor who had dared to encroach a little on a field belonging to the Loncinis. This proprietor, be it understood, was allied to the Fabianos. The memorial which this clever woman had herself drawn up was so remarkable for good sense and clearness, in one who had received so little education, that Theobald could not forbear exclaiming,

"You are indeed a superior woman!"

"Oh, no," said Annunciata quietly. "Any Corsican could do as much, if necessary. It answered my purpose, for I gained my cause."

The aunt and nephew then descended to the usual sitting-room, and Theobald found that his luggage had arrived. He had left it at Bastia on landing, and Monsieur Cafarelli had undertaken to forward it. He hastened to take out several presents he had brought for his relatives. For his great-grandmother, he had procured a handsome ivory crucifix, most beautifully carved. To Annunciata he presented a gold chain and earrings.

"For you, my Clarita," said he, "I have brought nothing but books, for I think they are

more necessary, and will be more acceptable than anything else."

He then gave his sister several highly-instructive works, a handsomely bound New Testament, the histories of several countries, besides many excellent literary French and Italian books. He had chosen this little collection with the greatest care.

"I will immediately begin a course of instruction with you," said he, "for there are many things yet for you to learn."

"Clarita is already very clever," objected Madame Loncini; "she reads and writes like a schoolmaster, and I do not think it possible to find her equal on the whole island."

"My good mother," replied Theobald, gently, "young men in these days learn much more than they formerly did; consequently, the education of young girls should also be more general, in order that the companion of man should not be too inferior to her husband, so that she may understand, and even second him if necessary. Who can tell? My sister may be destined to marry a Frenchman, or a Corsican brought up on the continent, and accustomed to the education of French women, a great many of whom unite much solid and varied learning to all the good and amiable qualities of their sex."

"My nephew is right," said Annuciata; "our Clarita should be ignorant of nothing that other girls are taught, and I advise her by all means to profit by her brother's offer."

"When shall we begin?" asked Clarita in her usual gentle voice.

"In a very few days, my dear sister," replied

Theobald. "I leave to-morrow for Bastia, and shall return as soon as possible."

"What! are you going to leave us again so soon?" timidly inquired the young girl.

"My absence will not be long, Clarita; I have some affairs to settle at Vescovato, and then I shall proceed to Bastia, to carry out a project that, I trust and believe, will receive the approbation of my family; it is that of uniting the remains of my dear mother to those of my father in the family vault.

"That is most suitable, and has my entire approbation," replied Annunciata.

Clarita pressed her brother's hand in silence, and wiped away a few drops that glistened like diamonds on her eyelids.

Theobald then went out to visit his old friends and acquaintances, and everywhere he was treated with consideration and received with kindness. In several places, similar offers of assistance were tendered to those made by Burcica the bandit, or rather, outlaw; he thanked the persons coldly, and changed the conversation. In the afternoon of the following day he went into the paddock to select the most spirited horse among those who were grazing, for the Corsican horses, of a half-wild nature, are not, like ours, shut up in stables, but are allowed to run at liberty, and are always in excellent order. While he was occupied in saddling and bridling his courser, Annunciata joined him, armed with a superb double-barrelled gun, fresh from the manufactory of St. Etienne.

"This is the result and fruit of my savings for some years," said she; "accept it, my dear nephew, for the love of your aunt, and use it in

remembrance of her when the time comes for upholding the honour of the family."

"I trust I may use your magnificent present at all times in a way that shall reflect honour on you and myself," stammered the young man, kissing his aunt's hand; "and, with your permission, I will now take it with me."

"Most assuredly, for it is unbecoming that you should go from home unarmed."

Annunciata then gave a great deal of good advice to her nephew concerning the negotiation he was about to commence, with some further information on the character and family of the Signor Peroncelli. Theobald then set out, and proceeded for many hours through woods without meeting with any habitation; he feared he had lost his way, and began to regret having declined his aunt's offer of a guide at the moment of his departure. While reflecting on what was best to be done, he perceived a shepherd at some distance. He was watering his flock at a fresh spring, which flowed from under a rock covered with moss. It was in truth a beautiful spot. Several young girls surrounded the spring, and were joking with each other, as they filled vases of antique shape with the clear liquid, carrying them on their heads with much ease and grace. Theobald contemplated this scene for some time, as it recalled to his mind those described in the Bible; then approaching one of the girls, he inquired if he were still far from Vescovato, and if he were in the right road; but instead of replying, the foolish little creature opened her large eyes, made a low courtesy, and ran off, laughing merrily. Thinking he was not understood, Theobald was going to repeat the question in the Corsican dialect, when a young

man, who was sketching the picturesque view that had just excited our hero's admiration, suddenly rose from behind a tree that had concealed him, and approaching the traveller, said with great politeness, "Monsieur, you are still a quarter of a league from the town. I am going to return there, and shall be most happy to show you the way if you will allow me."

"You will greatly oblige me," said Loncini, much surprised to find a sketcher in the woods of Vescovato. So leading his horse by the bridle, he began to examine the young artist, while they conversed on indifferent subjects. He was a man about twenty-five years of age, of middle stature, a most pleasing countenance, and of quiet and gentlemanly manners.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are no doubt a stranger, and consequently know no one at Vescovato; you will find neither hotel nor inn fit to receive you. Come and stay with my father; we shall consider your visit as a real *fête*."

"I imagined you also to be a stranger, first, from your accent, and above all from your admirable talent," replied Theobald, pointing to the sketch which the young man held in his hand. "This country, which abounds in magnificent views, can boast so few people capable of reproducing its beauties, that I am utterly at a loss to imagine from what artist you can have taken lessons."

"The little I know of painting and drawing I learnt in Paris," observed the sketcher, smiling.

"Then we are doubly countrymen," replied Theobald, "both by birth and education, for I also was born in Corsica, and educated on the continent."

"Well, that is an additional reason to induce you to accept my proposition, and remain our guest for some time. If you also are fond of drawing, I can show you some beautiful views; if you are a sportsman, we will go through woods where you will find game more abundant than in the preserves of a royal residence. I hope this will tempt you."

"It is, indeed, very difficult to resist such seductive offers," said Theobald, who felt attracted towards his companion as by a charm; "but I can remain but a short time at Vescovato, sufficient to talk over some affairs with Monsieur Peroncelli, with whom you are probably acquainted; but this I trust will not deprive me of the pleasure of seeing you before my departure."

"My dear sir," said the unknown, taking Theobald's hand affectionately, "I am the eldest son of Monsieur Peroncelli, and I consider myself most fortunate in being the first to welcome you. We will not separate so long as you remain at Vescovato."

Theobald was enchanted by this meeting, and showed by his manner and words all the pleasure it afforded him. The evening before, he had watched his sister, and reflected on her character; she was so modest as to be perfectly ignorant of her attractions; so timid and gentle, that the least look of reproof made her blush and tremble; so frank and candid, that all dissimulation was unknown to her; she would have disdained the harmless little artifices that many women unscrupulously employ to further their ends. In examining, I may say, the delicate shades of this superior nature, in breathing the virginal perfume of this tender flower, which, like the sensitive

plant, shrank at the slightest contact, Theobald had asked himself what would become of Clarita if wedded to one of the despotic husbands so general in Corsica, who see in the wife nothing but the master's upper servant, the humble slave of all his wishes, a creature of an inferior nature whose understanding is incapable of rising above the narrow circle of domestic duties? How was this young girl, whose mind was so right and pure so simple and artless, who lived entirely by the affections, how could she find happiness with a man of this description? What would be her probable fate if united to such a one? and the good brother trembled. Well, all these natural apprehensions had disappeared at the sight of his new acquaintance. It appeared really as if the eldest son of Monsieur Peroncelli were the man of high feeling, of refined and elegant manners, that Providence had reserved for the happiness of his cherished sister. In spite, however, of all these favourable impressions, Theobald was sufficiently master of himself to allow nothing to appear, reserve and Corsican prudence being the distinctive features of his character. He resolved to study as far as possible the character of the young man whom he already wished to look on as his future brother-in-law, and to be certain of his good qualities before he pronounced the chaste name of his sister in his presence. Endeavouring by every means to gain his friendship, Theobald listened with interest to the simple recital of the young man's confidence, and they were already in the large square of Vescovato, without either having perceived the length of the way.

Monsieur Peroncelli received our hero with all the hearty and cordial hospitality of a Corsican

but when he learnt the name of his guest, his cares and politeness were redoubled.

"I was your father's friend, and, as a natural consequence, am yours also, my dear sir," said he.

Monsieur Peroncelli was a short man, thickly set, and upwards of seventy years of age; but no sign of decrepitude had as yet struck his robust old age. He walked as upright as a dart, held his head high, with a proud and somewhat stern look. His wife and children trembled in his presence, and with them his slightest wish had all the force of law. No one of his family had ever been known to offer him the least contradiction. They sat down to the evening meal, and the mistress of the house waited on her husband and his guests, as Annunciata had waited on her nephew. Madame Peroncelli was a stout, handsome woman, of five-and-forty—brisk, and joyous, and who, while setting the example of absolute submission to the head of the family, exercised, nevertheless, an immense influence over him. Never did Monsieur Peroncelli decide on any important subject without first consulting his wife, and affairs only went the better in consequence. The maternal tenderness of Madame Peroncelli, her gaiety and good temper, softened, as it were, the proud and somewhat haughty nature of her husband. They both treated Theobald with the greatest respect, inquired with real interest after his family, and Monsieur Peroncelli passed, in his way, a great panegyric on Annunciata.

"That is a woman, if you will," said he. "She has the courage and energy of a man, with wit enough for a demon. You are very fortunate in

having her with you. As to Mademoiselle Clarita, every one agrees in saying she is an angel."

" My sister is, indeed, excellent in every respect," replied Theobald, without affectation.

Early the following morning, the old gentleman had a long conversation with his guest, took him all over his house and property, and showed him his flocks.

" All this," said he, " will become the portion of Francisco, my eldest son. My daughter received her fortune in ready money at the time of her marriage ; my two younger sons will receive theirs also in ready money. Francisco is an excellent son, who has never given me anything but satisfaction. He will shortly leave the island for Paris, where he will finish his college terms. You are aware that this necessary proceeding completes the education of a man. On his return, I shall endeavour to make a good marriage for him, for I should like to see my little grandchildren before I die."

Francisco, in his turn, seized on Theobald. According to his promise, he showed him some excellent sport, and took him to admire some most beautiful views—so beautiful, that our hero lamented they were unknown to the world.

During these long walks, Theobald employed all his penetration and natural sagacity to sound the character and principles of his companion, and all he discovered tended to confirm the good opinion he had entertained on his first acquaintance. Francisco, in reality, was a most amiable young man. He had received an excellent education, with religious instruction, and possessed high principles with many useful talents.

Theobald no longer hesitated to open his heart on the real object of his visit to Vescovato. Monsieur Peroncelli, who was waiting for this, made no attempt to conceal the pleasure it afforded him. Both the person and marriage-portion of Mademoiselle Loncini suited him exactly; but when he learnt the generous intentions of Theobald regarding his sister, his joy knew no bounds.

"You are a most worthy, good young man," said he, "and you may rely on my assistance and that of all my family, under all and any circumstances that may occur," and he laid particular stress on the last part of his speech.

Theobald appeared not to remark these words.

"It now remains to be seen," said Theobald, "if the interested parties will agree as quickly and readily as we have done."

"What do you mean, young man?" cried Monsieur Peroncelli, in a surprised and dissatisfied tone. "Do you suppose my son to be so badly brought up as to have any will but mine on the subject? And you—do you not stand in the light of a father to Mademoiselle Loncini?"

"It is exactly for that reason," replied the young man quietly, "that I would not force her inclinations. Suffer Francisco, my dear sir, to return me the visit I have just paid you. He will see my sister; and if they suit each other, I can only say it will make me very happy."

"It shall be so, as such is your wish, young man; but all these preliminaries, to say the least of it, appear to me perfectly useless, after all. Your sister is pretty and virtuous; I can also say, without vanity, that Francisco is an excellent

young man. What more is necessary? I can doubt they will mutually suit each other."

Some time afterwards Theobald took leave of his entertainers, and continued his journey to Bastia.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG HEAD OF THE FAMILY.

N his arrival at Bastia, Theobald found that M. Cafarelli had already taken all necessary steps to obtain the removal of his mother's remains; he had nothing left to do but to supply himself with the means of accomplishing the melancholy duty imposed by his filial duty. The steam-vessel which coasts round the island regularly every fortnight being at the moment employed in the transport of labourers from Lucca, Theobald was obliged to hire one for the purpose. These workpeople pass over annually great numbers, and for moderate wages, to relieve the indolent Corsicans the trouble of tilling the fertile land. The mortal remains of Madame Cini, removed from their temporary resting-places and enclosed in a double oaken coffin, were laid with pious respect in the saloon of the vessel, transformed for the occasion into a *chapelle ardente*. A priest, a relation of the Cafarellis, had offered his services to the young man, and with him the service for the dead during the voyage. The vessel coasted along the shore of the roadstead "della Padulella," where the embarkation took place; the coffin was then placed on a cart drawn by oxen, and conveyed,

though not without much trouble, to Piovela, where Annunciata had arranged everything for receiving her sister-in-law's remains in a worthy and becoming manner. The clergy of the village went in procession to meet the corpse; and the numerous friends of the family accompanied it to the church, where the mass was celebrated with much solemnity. The funeral *cortége* then proceeded through the country to the family vault, situate at the foot of a green hill which overshadowed the little mortuary chapel. Theobald, the chief mourner, was to all appearance grave and composed; the feelings of his soul, as he passed before the house of the Fabianos, the cause of the heartrending misfortunes that had befallen him, remained a secret between his God and himself.

Annunciata and Clarita also followed in the procession; they were both in deep mourning, their faces covered by veils. A most lively expression of hatred, pride, and regret, might have been seen in the countenance of the former; the latter had nothing but tears and prayers to offer, at the recollection of her much-loved mother. Annunciata had herself taken a part in the preparation of the funeral repast, much against her nephew's wishes, who greatly disapproved the custom of feasting on such an occasion. It was in vain, his repugnance had to give way before the arbitrary will of his aunt. At length the guests retired, and the brother and sister were left alone to interchange their impressions and their hopes.

Some time afterwards, Theobald had the pleasure of presenting Francisco Peroncelli to his family; all were enchanted by his agreeable manners and good sense. Remaining three days

at Piocala, he became a sincere admirer of the modest graces, and the many virtues of Clarita, and declaring in the warmest manner, the happiness he should experience in making her his wife, he pressed Theobald to solicit his sister's consent to an engagement.

The evening before young Peroncelli's departure, Theobald wished to have some private conversation with his sister. He found her seated by the side of her great-grandmother, spinning wool and singing at the same time to amuse the old lady.

"Leave your distaff, Clarita," said he, "and take a turn in the garden with me. My dear," said her brother taking her hand affectionately, as soon as they were alone, "what I have to say is very serious, and I assure you I feel greatly embarrassed by the part of father, which I am called on to play."

"What can it be?" inquired Clarita, almost frightened at this beginning; "I hope you are not going to leave us again."

"No, my dear sister, but I feel very young and inexperienced to act as mentor to a girl of your age. Listen to me. Annunciata is a being altogether unlike the rest of the world. She does not feel like you and I, consequently there can be no sympathy between you. She can clearly be no companion for you, and our good grandmother is so aged, we cannot hope to keep her long among us. You must then have some natural protector, whose duty it will be to conduct and shield you through all the dangers of the world—in one word, I am thinking of settling you in life. Francesco Pironcelli appears to me to be suitable in every way; he is a young man of much merit, of whom

every one thinks and speaks highly ; but I would decide on nothing without first asking your opinion and consulting your wishes on the subject."

" I know," said Clarita, with heightened colour, " that I must obey you in everything, for you replace my father, but as you are kind enough to consult my wishes, I will ask you to give me time for reflection, for my books have taught me never to undertake anything of importance, without first humbling myself before God, and seeking His aid in prayer."

" You are right," said her brother ; " but as Peroncelli leaves us to-morrow, I should wish him to take back a decisive answer to his father." He then dwelt on all the good qualities of Francisco, and pointed out to Clarita all the advantages of the proposed union, and left her in an agitation of mind easily imagined. Clarita was a very young girl, without experience, knowing nothing of the things of the world ; but affectionate and pious by nature as well as education, she had the most entire confidence in prayer, and had recourse to it on all occasions of difficulty. She prayed long for assistance, and only appeared in the sitting-room at the hour of the family meal.

Some hours previous to the departure of young Peroncelli, Theobald again sought his sister in his grandmother's room, and begged her to inform him of her decision.

" I have no will but yours," said she to him ; " dispose of me as you think fit."

" My dear Clarita," replied her brother, " I do entreat of you, forbear that set form of absolute submission, in use among the Corsican girls ; and tell me candidly, as your best friend, if you consent willingly to marry Francisco ?"

"Yes," replied she, ingenuously; "because I believe him to be good and virtuous, as you have assured me."

"Well then, my dear sister, consider him from this day as your affianced husband before God. I will hasten to give him your reply."

At the news of Clarita's consent, Francisco was overjoyed, embraced his friend, and thanked him from the bottom of his heart for his good offices; he then took leave of all the family, promising to do all in his power to hasten the time of his return.

Theobald accompanied his future brother-in-law half-way to Vescovato, where the young man was only to pass a short time before he embarked for the continent. Clarita, silent and thoughtful, took her place as usual by the side of her great-grandmother.

"My child," said the latter, appearing on this occasion to collect the full force of her intellectual faculties, which she only possessed at rare intervals, "the words you have just pronounced are a positive engagement; from this day your person and reputation are sacred, and as a trust confided to your care and good faith, and which you are bound to keep intact. Above all things, foster your affection for him whom your relations have selected, and who one day must occupy, after God, the first place in your heart. When you are his wife, employ all that Heaven has given you of wisdom and attractions to please him, console him in trouble and comfort him in fatigues; let order reign in every part of your house, govern his servants, and contribute by your work and economy to the prosperity of his home; be faithful to him, obedient to his wishes, and bring up his

children in the respect that is due to the head of the family. It was thus I endeavoured to act with the husband that my parents had given me, and it is the conviction of having done my duty to the best of my power, that gives me the hope of soon rejoining him in heaven." Clarita listened to this advice with pious respect, and promised to conform herself to it exactly.

The following day Theobald began seriously to occupy himself with his sister's instruction; she was a docile and most intelligent pupil, and made such rapid progress that he was both surprised and charmed. He regulated the hours of her lessons and study, as he himself felt the necessity of working also on his own account. Often in his leisure time he went into the woods, armed with the excellent gun presented to him by his aunt, and returned home laden with game of every description; the delight of Annunciata then manifested itself by loud exclamations, for she was proud of her nephew's address: on these occasions she relieved him herself of his gun and game-bag, and reserving what was necessary for the use of the house, she sent the rest as presents to her friends and neighbours. Time passed quickly with Theobald in these peaceful occupations. He often took long walks in the fields with Clarita, and this exercise strengthened her health. More frequently still, the brother and sister bent their steps to the resting place of their ancestors, where Theobald watered the flowers that grew around the solitary chapel, and Clarita wove garlands and crowns to place on her mother's tomb; then both knelt and prayed in silence for their parents, and returned home, their hearts full of salutary thoughts. Sometimes Annunciata accompanied

them to the little chapel, resting awhile under the shade of the cypress and mastich trees, and then continuing her way to the mucchio of Pépe Loncini, she deposited in the hiding-place of the red cross a small bag of powder and shot for Burcica, the outlaw; she then rejoined her companions in haste.

Meantime, this vehement young woman could not understand what she considered her nephew's supineness; for a long time she thought this apparent tranquillity of mind concealed some bold project or some happily-contrived plan, and she would not allow herself any imprudent question. But weeks and months passed away, and her young relative continued to enjoy his peaceful existence. The notary, who was to have sold his practice to Theobald, expressed a wish to continue business for some years to come, and the latter appeared very well pleased with the arrangement, for he enjoyed his happy quiet life, and the unbounded affection of his sister; his unerring rifle was formidable only to the game on the mountains, his mind was only occupied with his studies, and his imagination teemed with happy plans for the future.

Little by little the report spread in the village that the last of the Loncinis was not so terrible as Annunciata had described him, or as the muscular appearance of the young man might lead them to imagine.

Giuseppe Fabiano, who had at first shut himself up in his house, as in an impregnable fortress, took courage, and ventured to walk in the open square and shoot in the woods.

Annunciata was no longer congratulated on the presumed courage and physical strength of her nephew; indeed, a shade of irony was now and

then perceptible in the conversation of many of the neighbours.

Theobald was perfectly indifferent to all this, but to his proud and vindictive aunt these observations were so many darts that pierced her heart. She longed to inoculate her nephew's soul with the burning thirst for vengeance that consumed her own. She would have sacrificed her whole existence, could she have filled his place for one day, to revenge herself and then die. Disgusted with seeing him lead a useful and innocent life, she tried at first with much reserve, afterwards more openly, to excite his naturally irritable disposition,—in fact, to shame him out of what she called his weakness.

The young man could not remain insensible to these indirect attacks, for the blood of a Corsican flowed in his veins. He often bounded with rage at the recollection of the outrages which, according to Annunciata's language, he had received in the person of his ancestors. But religious principle very shortly took the upper hand in his generous mind, and each combat became another triumph of grace over natural propensities. The insinuations of his vindictive aunt soon changed to open reproaches, and each day they became more and more direct. From this time, a life of unspeakable torment and bitterness commenced for Theobald. Sometimes, beside himself with the violence of this fury, whom he could not avoid, he was on the point of silencing her, by making her feel the absolute authority of the head of the family, whose privileges she was the first to proclaim; at other times he felt fascinated by a siren, who so well knew how, and on what occasion, to touch the weak points of his impetuous charac-

ter, his self-love and honour, and then he shared all his aunt's fury and passion. Fearing at these times that he might not always have sufficient command over himself to resist the hateful and baneful feelings she succeeded in exciting, he resolved on leaving the paternal roof, and seeking under a less scorching sky the courage to remain innocent; but a glance towards Clarita would instantly change this resolution. The angelic countenance of his sister, beaming with sweetness and charity, exercised over Theobald a power which he had no wish to avoid. One word from her brought back, as if by enchantment, some of the pure calm he had lost; for in her mind were stowed great treasures of piety and love. Indulgence and pardon flowed from her as from an inexhaustible source. She detested crime, but was without hatred of the criminal.

This excellent girl understood instinctively what passed in her brother's mind, and as her excessive timidity did not allow her to explain herself openly, she employed all her good sense and tenderness to console his troubles, and to divert him from dark thoughts. Walking with him, whenever she could, without neglecting Madame Loncini, she endeavoured by conversations full of gaiety and charm to recall to his mind the instructions of the good baroness, and her excellent advice. Often directing their steps to the burial place of the family, she conversed with him of the mother they had lost, and whom they still so deeply regretted; of the grief which all these vindictive feelings had caused the poor woman during her life; and warmly extolling the gentleness and goodness of this fond mother, she would draw her brother into the chapel, saying,—“Let us

implore the Lord to grant us the same virtues ;" and when Theobald had conversed for some time with Clarita, he became gradually calmer, feeling stronger and more master of himself. The prayers they offered up together, were to him as heavenly dew, refreshing his soul, and allaying the devouring fire of his passions, and he arose calm and with a serene countenance, smiling at his sister, and admiring the beauties of nature with her ; in truth, Annuciata, at times, appeared to Theobald as the evil genius personified, while Clarita really was to him a consoling angel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROOM IN THE TURRET.

ONE evening, after a violent scene between the aunt and nephew, Theobald had retired to his room in much excitement. Agitated and irresolute, he sat at his writing-table, resting his head between his hands, his mind so disturbed that he scarcely knew whether Annunciata or himself best understood the laws of real honour. At length, when he lifted up his head, his eyes were dry, his forehead burning, and he presented a melancholy example of the baneful effects of vindictive passions. Was not this young man in possession of numberless blessings showered upon him by the Almighty, and yet was it possible for him to be happy? Could he enjoy any of them under the influence of his aunt's evil suggestions? Do we not all know that without peace the best of earthly blessings lose their value? Poor Theobald, he felt this truth most bitterly, and sighing, "Alas!" said he, "how happy should I be but for my aunt's mistaken idea of honour. O God! give me strength to resist—to remain pure of human blood."

His eyes at this moment fell on the New Testament which he had given his sister, and which

—was open at the following passage of St. Paul's to the Romans:—

“Render to no man evil for evil. Take heed to do good, not only before God, but also before men. Live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, for vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”

These words of the apostle, and the manner in which he had found them, produced a lively impression on his mind. What hand but Clarita's could have placed them on his table, and within his view?

“Then she must have read in my heart—she understands all I suffer,” said Theobald inwardly. “This apparently simple child shares all my feelings. Her thoughts and mine are the same. And why should there not be other people here who feel as she does—men of sense and good principle, who have not adopted the terrible prejudices of Annunciata, who would believe in my courage without giving them proof of it by becoming a murderer? Oh, my gentle sister, how I love thee for thy modest virtues!—how I thank thee for thy kind sympathy! ”

The thought that another heart shared his trouble—that another reasonable creature approved his resistance—comforted and soothed him. He made his nightly prayer with much fervour, and renewed his positive determination to remain innocent of human blood. The following morning, at sunrise, the young man was awoke by the singing of the birds at his casement. He jumped up, and, opening the windows, he inhaled with delight the soft morning air, still impregnated with the fragrant dew which imparts to the flowers all their freshness, and

revivifies them after being withered by the heat of the preceding day. He looked vaguely over the now deserted square, and from thence to the thicket, which covered the hill and part of the plain. The latter was already perfumed with the odour of myrtle-flowers, which were just beginning to open, and was diversified by small clusters of chestnut-trees, covered with rich foliage, which rose majestically here and there. All this abundance of flowers and verdure resembled an immense English garden, or rather a park, that surrounded and encircled the village. While the young man was admiring this enchanting scene, he fancied he saw two human forms moving on the top of the hill which led to the Red Cross. Theobald seized his telescope, and, fixing his attention on this point of the horizon, he distinctly perceived a man and woman gesticulating vehemently, as if animated by a most lively discussion. They continued to converse for a quarter of an hour; then they separated, and each descended the hill in an opposite direction. The man plunged into the thicket. The female figure, on the contrary, continued her way to the village, and, light of foot as a fawn, she soon passed the narrow alley covered with briars that leads directly to it. The morning breeze played with her *mezzaro* of black lace, making it flutter around her neck and figure, while her small feet touched the tufts of heath so lightly that they scarcely seemed to bend under their weight.

“From whence can Annuciata come at this early hour?” said Theobald, who recognized his aunt as she approached the house; and, while putting this question to himself, he shut the window and sat down to the table. But he was

scarcely seated before some one knocked loudly at his door, and Annunciata, with her eyes fiercely glaring, her bosom heaving, her forehead streaming with perspiration, presented herself to his view, mad with savage joy.

“Take your arms! take your arms, Theobald! the moment is now come in which you can prove you are a man. Seize your gun, and this pistol as well—that belonged to your father—and convince me that you can reach other game than defenceless hares.”

“Is the island suddenly attacked by the enemies of the state?” coldly demanded her nephew, crossing his arms over his chest. “In that case I am ready; otherwise, I do not understand you.”

“Do not let us lose time in useless discourse,” cried Annunciata, with a tone and gesture of authority. “I have just met Burcica, as I was taking powder and shot for him to the red cross. ‘Signora,’ said he, in a joyful tone; ‘I was going to meet you at this very time, for I have just found a certain way of serving you. Send your nephew to me immediately, and take care no one sees him leave the village. I will wait for him at the waterfall, and he will then know what I am worth.’”

“I will have nothing to do with your outlaw,” replied the young man, “and do not seek his society, and am glad of this opportunity of telling you how I disapprove of your keeping up any acquaintance with him, especially on subjects that do not please me.”

“You do not know what you say,” said she, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. “Listen to me, and learn that Fabiano hunted all day

yesterday in the wood, and Burcica knows from good authority that he will shoot there again to-day."

"Well, and what is that to me?" interrupted Theobald with impatience. "I have neither the power nor the wish of preventing any one, who-ever it may be, from shooting in the wood."

"Listen to me," pursued the fury, stamping on the ground; "the moments are precious, more precious than you suppose. In the mountain there exists a deep grotto, where Giuseppe Fabiano—*your father's assassin*, understand me well—where Giuseppe Fabiano is accustomed to take his *siesta*, when he passes the day shooting. He believes himself in perfect security, for the entrance to the grotto is concealed by the gnarled branches of an old oak, and is invisible to the eye; but Burcica, who explores the thicket in every direction, has just discovered this hiding-place, and what is more, another outlet more secret still which leads to the same grotto, and by which you could easily surprise your enemy during his sleep. I undertake all the rest; but go, go instantly, I entreat you. Burcica awaits you, and I answer for his fidelity as for myself. He is altogether devoted to us."

"My aunt," said Theobald, weighing his words, and making the greatest efforts to speak calmly; "I would not willingly be wanting in the respect I owe you, my father's sister, but in his revered name, I now and for ever declare to you that I only intend to revenge his memory by irreproachable conduct, open to all the world, and I implore of you to let me live quietly for the future."

"And it is in the name of your father," cried Annunciata, with fury; "that I also declare in

my turn that I would rather see you dead than dishonoured, and I will not cease to pursue you with my indignation, until I find in you the courage of a Loncini."

"In this case, either you or I must quit this house," said the young man, exasperated.

"You are the master," replied Annuciata, with apparent calm; "but before you drive me from the home of my fathers, which I have preserved intact for you, grant me one request, and follow me to the turret, of which I alone possess the key."

"Forgive the rudeness of which I have been guilty," cried Theobald, already full of repentance for his rash words, on seeing a tear glisten on the eyelid of his aunt; "you must know that the words did not proceed from my heart."

"Come, Theobald," said she in a grave and solemn voice.

They silently ascended the narrow and crooked staircase which led to the turret, and Annuciata turning the key in an old, worm-eaten door, introduced the young man into a dark, circular chamber, of which she hastened to open the window. Not a single piece of furniture decorated this room, but round the walls painted in fresco, were placed at regular intervals, high stands of wood supporting dusty garments of every description.

"My nephew," said Annuciata in a sepulchral tone; "do you see this mantle of Corsican cloth, on which the dust and lapse of ages have been unable to efface this stain of blood?—It belonged to your ancestor Pepé Loncini, whose burial-place is close to the red cross. He was the first of our family who fell under the blows of a Fabiano, and

the cause of the murder has never been known. His blood was revenged by his nephew Paolo Loncini, for Pepé had only left an infant daughter, whom Paolo married later. This shirt and waist-coat belonged to the son of Paolo, traitorously assassinated by a certain Luigi Fabiano, and revenged by the head of our family. On this stand, behold the garments of three of our great uncles killed in that famous combat, which cost the Fabianos five vigorous men, all in the prime of life ; their blood had already been avenged on the field of battle ; but that of my grandfather was so still more gloriously by his two sons Alfonso and Tiburcio. And now, last of all, do you recognize this pair of grey trowsers, this riding-coat, on which the trace of blood appears so recent, and is still visible ? This is your father's blood, Theobald, the only one of the family who awaits the vengeance to which he is entitled."

"Oh ! my father, my dear father," cried the young man, greatly affected at sight of the garment he only knew too well, and large tears of filial piety fell on the bloody marks.

"Your tears cannot wash out that stain," said Annunciata, watching her nephew's discomposure with the joy of a tigress. "Blood alone can efface blood."

But he heard her not ; kneeling before these gloomy relics, the same that had been displayed at the assizes, he appeared to see his father once more, as on the last occasion ; at one moment robust and full of health, and then, extended on the earth pale and disfigured, and this terrible recollection filled him with anguish. He remained for several minutes absorbed in the deepest grief, forgetting the whole universe ; at length a burning

hand was placed on his shoulder. He raised his head; his aunt was before him, her arms crossed over her bosom, her veil thrown back, leaving her energetic countenance uncovered, and never had the resemblance appeared so perfect, her expression recalling the features of his father Antonio Loncini.

Theobald was struck by the likeness, which had never appeared so exact as at that moment.

“The honour of the family is in your hands,” said she in a stern but gloomy voice.

The young man shuddered, and arose slowly.

“Burcica awaits you; will you not join him, Theobald?” continued the tempter. “Will you not revenge your father’s murder?”

He reflected a moment. “No,” murmured he, at length, so low she scarcely heard him.

“No,” repeated the voice of the haughty woman. “Do you dare to refuse?” and her majestic figure appeared to raise itself still higher, while her eyes gleamed with a terrible expression.

“Then,” she exclaimed with impetuosity, “in the name of our murdered ancestors, listen to these words: Theobald Loncini, you are a coward!” and thrusting him hastily out of the chamber, she locked herself in.

“May you have cause to repent the insult you have just thrown in my face!” cried Theobald, shaking the door furiously, for his whole being revolted at this outrage. Leaning with all her strength against it, Annunciata doubled the resistance of the worm-eaten wood, for she justly feared that a blow would have broken it down. However, she almost immediately heard her nephew’s footsteps on the staircase, and the now trembling woman breathed more freely; she

listened for some time at the lock of the door, and heard Theobald enter his room, then leave it; instantly changing her position, she rushed to the window, and perceived him going towards the thicket with his gun on his shoulder. The heart of the proud and revengeful woman then beat with such vehemence that it appeared ready to burst from her bosom; her eyes brightened with savage joy, as she anxiously watched the course of Theobald towards the country, and when she was quite satisfied that he was taking the road to the Red Cross, she allowed a cry of triumph to escape her, and quickly descended from the turret. In the hope of success, Annunciata's plan had been laid beforehand, in order to avert all suspicion, and even to enable her nephew to prove an *alibi*, if necessary. By the order of Mademoiselle Loncini, a servant, was despatched instantly to fetch different remedies from the neighbouring apothecary, and another was sent to request the immediate attendance of the physician, telling him that the case was very urgent, Annunciata being well aware that this gentleman was himself very ill, and unable to stir.

Thanks to all these artifices, the report of Theobald's severe indisposition soon spread through the whole village. Clarita was informed of it on leaving church after the early service, and she immediately hastened to her brother's room, but Annunciata stopped her on the threshold.

"May I not see my brother?" asked the young girl.

"No, not at present, Clarita—he is asleep," replied her aunt.

"I trust, at least, that Theobald is in no danger."

“No—I hope not,” stammered Annunciata, embarrassed by these simple words. “Go, rejoin our good mother. I will call you when he is able to see you.”

“I hope it will be soon,” replied Clarita, obeying with sadness.

Annunciata, when alone, felt an involuntary feeling of melancholy take possession of her heart. So long as she had been obliged to act and exert herself in order to spread the false report of her nephew’s illness, she had been sensible of nothing but the joy of her triumph. Now, however, that calm reflection had replaced action, a kind of terror accompanied thought. This beautiful woman was passionate, proud, and vindictive; but she loved all those belonging to her with the greatest tenderness. A Christian education would have made this haughty spirit a woman in the true sense of the word, for Annunciata possessed great and noble qualities; but prejudice and ignorance had turned them to the service of her violent passions. She had an almost maternal affection for Theobald; but, as she had declared to him, she literally would have preferred seeing him dead rather than dishonoured. This sentiment would have been sublime, if what Annunciata called honour had been anything but the deformed shadow of that noble and exalted virtue. This feeling, inspired by real piety, would have recalled the fine words of Queen Blanche to her son Louis IX. (surnamed the saint); but, dictated as they were, in this case, by a barbarous prejudice, it became nothing but the expression of a savage hatred.

Annunciata firmly believed that Theobald had gone in pursuit of his father’s assassin; but as

the hours passed, and he did not return, she became less hopeful—less sure of the success of her enterprise. Giuseppe, the only one of the Fabianos who resided in the village, and the one whom she most cordially hated, was known to be a most artful, as well as courageous man.

“Who can tell,” said she to herself, “if Burchica’s plans were as well laid as he believed them to be? Besides, who can answer for unforeseen circumstances? And Theobald is the last of the Loncinis, the only hope of our family.”

She began to fear that she had rashly exposed his life, and these thoughts tortured her heart.

“Oh, why am I not a man,” cried she, “that I might have accompanied him, and defended him at the peril of my life!”

At length she was unable to endure the weight of her grief alone, and went in search of her niece. She found the young girl half sad, half joyous.

“Is Theobald awake?” said she, entering the room and gazing round for him.

“Listen to me,” replied Annunciata, pressing a burning kiss on her pure calm forehead,—“Your brother has never been ill, but he does not run the less danger for that, for he is in the thicket in pursuit of Fabiano. Do you understand, child?”

“Great heavens! what do you say?” cried Clarita, growing pale. “My brother—my noble brother—in pursuit of Fabiano! Oh no, it is impossible!”

“Silence,” exclaimed Annunciata. “Every one must believe him seriously ill—his very life depends upon it. Go and pray for him. Recite the litanies of the Blessed Virgin—implore her

intercession. You, poor child, are so good, so pure—your prayers must be heard.”

“Let us pray together, dear aunt.”

They then both knelt before the image of the Holy Virgin, which stood in one of the recesses of the room.

Clarita, raising her tearful eyes to heaven, cried with all humility: “Thou wilt not abandon him, Mother of orphans, consoler of the afflicted; thou wilt not permit my cherished brother, so noble and pure, to offend the Most High, by steeping his hands in the blood of a creature made in the image of Jesus Christ. Thou wilt not suffer him, either, to fall under the blows of an assassin. Have pity on me, Divine Mother; intercede and pray for me, for I have neither father nor mother, and Theobald is all that remains to me on earth.”

And while uttering this simple prayer, Clarita's tears fell less rapidly. It appeared to her that the Almighty stretched forth a protecting hand to shield her much-loved brother.

Annunciata's prayer was far different.

“Grant, Lord,” cried she, “that his arm may be more rapid than the lightning, and more terrible than the thunderbolt! Let him overthrow his enemies, and trample on them! Let him grind them to powder; and may our name become celebrated during the lapse of ages!”

This prayer brought no relief to Annunciata's perverted mind, for God rejects all that is contrary to charity. She soon arose, therefore, without hope, and without consolation: and taking hasty strides in the apartment, she watched her niece with a feeling of jealous impatience: the young girl was still on her knees, but her physiognomy

expressed nothing now save a soft sadness, tempered with resignation and hope.

"How happy she appears," said her aunt inwardly, "how I desire to resemble her, for my mind is torn by most direful forebodings."

Suddenly perceiving the telescope, which Theobald had left on his table, she seized it, ascended to the highest part of the house, and endeavoured to satisfy herself that nothing extraordinary was passing in the country; but she looked in vain, listened, and looked again. The sun shone as in the finest, most serene days; the monotonous song of the grasshopper alone disturbed the silence of the woods. This terrible day, every moment of which increased her anguish, wore away at last; the sun slowly disappeared behind the hill, leaving a train of red clouds tipped with gold, the certain forerunner of a beautiful morrow; the moon, rising majestically, penetrated the glades between the trees, and its mild rays sent beams of light into the depth of the thicket; all nature was silent, the birds slept on the branches, and Theobald was still absent. Annunciata now could find no rest, her anxieties overwhelmed her, all her strength of mind suddenly forsook her, for she only expected to see him brought home dead, like her brother Antonio. This courageous woman began to feel what fear is. "Holy mother of our Lord, if thou wilt send him home safe, I promise to go barefooted to *Notre Dame de Basteleira*," cried she in her anguish.

Incapable of waiting longer, or remaining, she called Clarita, and they set out together in search of Theobald; but they had scarcely proceeded a few steps beyond their own property than they met him, returning home breathless, walking with

difficulty, his clothes covered with dust, his hair disordered, and his left hand wrapped in a blood-stained handkerchief.

“Great heaven! What has happened?” exclaimed his sister.

“Nothing of much consequence,” replied Theobald, in a weak voice; “only I think I have the ague.” Annunciata took his hand, and found it was burning with fever.

“You must immediately go to bed,” said she, without daring to ask any questions.

The party of three then entered the house without having been seen by any one.

CHAPTER VIII.

M A G N A N I M I T Y.

WHEN Theobald left home in the morning, exasperated by the outrage he had received from his aunt, he had no other object than breathing the open air, and cooling the fit of passion which agitated his whole being. It was mechanically and by habit that he took his gun, and turned into the path leading to the burial-place of his family, and from thence to the Red Cross. He had scarcely walked an hundred steps before the recollection of his violence filled him with shame and confusion.

“ Shall I always be the slave of my passion ? ” said he ; “ how could I act in so unseemly a manner towards a woman, and one so devoted, in fact, more ignorant than guilty, my father’s sister, whom, after all, I am bound to respect. When shall I be able to master my feelings ? But then, O my God, to what terrible trials I am subjected ! Unfortunate being that I am, my own aunt accuses me of cowardice ; and without failing in my religious belief, I cannot clear myself in her eyes from this cruel injury. Oh ! why may I not die gloriously for my faith, or fight hand to hand with the assassins of my race ; neither their number nor their skill would deter me ; but to be unable to

defy them without wounding my conscience, to hear myself branded as a coward, and appear to deserve the affront, oh, it is a torture above my power to endure, unless Thou wilt aid me to support it, O my God. Yes," continued he after a pause, "may I live dishonoured in the eyes of my countrymen, if it must be so; but let me remain pure in the sight of heaven."

In pronouncing these words he reached the burial-place, there his fervent and pious prayers became still more ardent; and when he left the chapel he struck into a road entirely opposed to that leading to the waterfall, where Burcica was waiting for him. After having walked a long time at random, through rocks and briars, he felt tired, and sat down to rest at the foot of a spreading arbutus. At the same moment the report of a gun was heard, several shot passed through his clothes, and two entered his left hand. Irritated by this attack and the sight of his blood, Theobald, without considering that so small a charge could scarcely have been intended for him; darted off in pursuit of the imprudent sportsman; whom he instantly recognized, for it was no other than Giuseppe Fabiano, whose deceitful and savage countenance had remained deeply impressed on our hero's mind ever since he had seen him at the assize court. At the unexpected sight of Theobald, the man threw away his unloaded gun and seized the pistol he always carried in his belt, but whether fear or surprise prevented him taking good aim, or that his adversary sprang aside, he missed, the ball struck and sunk in the trunk of a tree; and Fabiano finding himself entirely defenceless and *in the power of his enemy*, instantly turned and

sought safety in flight; but had scarcely proceeded many yards, when his foot catching in some brambles, he fell heavily to the ground in the midst of the thorny bushes, and before he had time to extricate himself Theobald had come up with him. A violent temptation, such as God alone gives us power to resist, now took possession of the young man; he beheld his father's murderer at his feet, the enemy of his race lay extended before him, the same who had just made an attempt on his own life. Besides, did he not find himself in a state of legitimate defence? By a movement as quick as thought he took aim at his adversary—but by another, more rapid still, he raised the barrel of his gun, and disdaining so easy a vengeance, which appeared little short of murder, he hastened quickly from the spot to escape another temptation.

Theobald walked long without object, without plan, until at length fatigue obliged him to take repose. His heart beat violently, there was a humming noise in his ears, confused memories crowded his brain; he remembered but one circumstance distinctly, and that stood out in characters of fire—that he had been on the point of killing an unarmed and defenceless man, and he thanked God fervently that he had not stained his hand in human blood. A burning thirst tormented him, he drank copiously at an icy-cold spring, and then endeavoured to find his way back to the village. Night came on before he succeeded, and with great trouble he reached home. A deadly coldness had suddenly seized him, to which a burning fever succeeded, and he could scarcely support himself when he met his aunt and sister. They both passed the night by

his bedside, for his state was really alarming; his head burning, his breathing oppressed, and strange words escaping in his delirium; the name of Fabiano, and the words murderer and assassin were constantly on his lips. Clarita was greatly alarmed, and prayed by her brother's side. Towards morning the fever abated, and the sick man recovered his senses. During a temporary absence of Annunciata, Clarita, fearing everything from her brother's incoherent discourse, entreated him to relate the events of the preceding day. He complied with her wishes, and concealed nothing, either of his meeting with Fabiano or his feelings on the occasion.

"Oh, my poor brother, how much you have suffered," cried the young girl, "but at the same time how acceptable to the Almighty must be the victory you have so nobly gained over yourself, and of what graces will it be the source?"

A cry of indignation and rage burst from the doorway,—it proceeded from Annunciata, who, having returned unperceived, had heard the whole of Theobald's recital, and his sister's reply. The thought that so good an opportunity had been lost, and the still more painful conviction of the utter hopelessness of ever obtaining what she so ardently desired from her nephew, excited her to fury. She was about to overwhelm him with reproaches, though in her secret soul she could not forbear admiring his noble conduct; but the state to which he was now reduced, obliged her to contain herself, and she accordingly went out of doors in order freely to indulge her grief and disappointment. Several neighbours had called to inquire after Theobald, Mademoiselle Loncini, in giving them the necessary information, could not avoid showing

the disappointment and regret she so deeply felt. A few words of discontent, some half-confidences, which escaped in her bad humour, were maliciously interpreted. The story told by Fabiano, and repeated by his friends, contributed still more to throw a shade of suspicion on Theobald's conduct; and it soon circulated in the village that the last of the Loncinis had not inherited the courage of his forefathers. Fabiano did not possess sufficient nobility of mind to publish his enemy's magnanimity; perhaps, indeed, he could not understand the feeling, and he only thanked his stars for having preserved his life in a meeting with him. For several weeks Theobald's state caused his family serious alarm: Clarita would not leave him night or day, exhorting him to patience, paying him most unremitting attention, and lavishing on him the tenderest cares. At length youth and a strong constitution triumphed over the severity of the attack, and a happy change took place; our hero's strength returned by slow degrees, and in a short time he was able to leave his bed. The summer was now drawing to a close, the sun had lost its extreme ardour, and autumn, charged with fruits, presented its choice offerings. Theobald, free from anxiety, and perfectly happy, enjoyed the return of health to the utmost. Leaning on his sister's arm, he had made several turns in the garden; the hues of health began to reappear on his sunken cheeks, and he had already talked of the necessity of recommencing the studies which had been so unfortunately stopped by his illness, so that Francisco might find her still more interesting on his return.

One morning that he had awoke more calm

and happy than usual, he perceived Clarita kneeling at the foot of the Madonna, her eyes raised to heaven and bathed with tears.

“What is the matter, my beloved sister?” asked Theobald with anxiety.

The young girl arose, embraced her brother, and forcing a smile, replied,—

“Nothing. I could have no real grief now, for I am so happy to see you in better health.”

“And I—I insist on knowing all that interests you, Clarita.”

“You shall know nothing,” said she, endeavouring to assume a playful tone; but there were tears in her voice.

“And why not tell him?” interposed Annunziata, with bitterness, for she had just entered the room. “Must he not sooner or later know our shame?”

Clarita cast an imploring look at her aunt, but the inflexible, hard-hearted creature, drawing from her bosom an unsealed letter,—

“Read that,” said she to her nephew, “and then tell me if I am peculiar in my feelings, or have such extraordinary ideas, as you have often reproached me with.”

Theobald took the paper and read as follows:—

“Mademoiselle,—I highly esteem your character, and your niece suited us in every way; but never shall son of mine enter a family whose chief is suspected of cowardice. Believe me, mademoiselle, that it is with extreme regret I feel myself obliged to withdraw my promise, and that nothing but so powerful a motive could induce me to renounce an alliance which insured my own

interests, as well as the happiness of a beloved son.

“ I have the honour to remain,
“ Your faithful servant,
“ PERONCELLI.”

Theobald read over this fatal letter twice, as if to find a less unfavourable meaning. What passed in his mind would be impossible to describe. His natural pride, his attachment to Clarita, his mind and heart, all suffered at the same time. However, as long as Annunciata remained in the room, watching the effect of the letter on his countenance with a look of rage and contempt, he had sufficient command over himself to affect a calm very far from his real feelings.

But when the two women had left the room, and he could freely give vent to his feelings, he groaned, rolled on his bed, and sobbed like a child. To feel young, robust, full of energy and courage, and to be accused of cowardice for having gained a most difficult victory over his passions; to lose by magnanimity of conduct, and for a scruple of conscience, all that was dearest to him on earth, his own reputation and the hope of settling his beloved sister,—in truth, it was a terrible situation. If he could but defy Giuseppe, and then instantly demand satisfaction for the deep injury he had just received from Peroncelli, with what ardour would he seize his arms, even were he certain of losing his life in avenging his offended honour! But the same divine laws which had withheld him hitherto, were always the same, inflexible in their charity and peace; and he wept like a child. Poor Theobald! he wept that he could only shed tears instead of blood.

"Oh, my beloved Clarita," cried he in his despair, "I swore to my dying mother to be a father to you, and far from contributing to your happiness, I am the sole obstacle to it. Without me, without the fatality that pursues me, you would have become the happy wife of Francisco, of that excellent young man, whose virtuous principles and amiable qualities suited so well with the modesty and gentleness of your disposition, of that young man, who in your angelic candour, you loved already, no doubt, and whom you must now renounce for ever."

But while he lamented in this manner, a noble idea suddenly crossed his mind, joy sparkled through his tears, like a ray of sunshine after a storm ; he had just found a legitimate way of establishing his reputation, and of repairing the involuntary wrong he had done his sister. This thought, for which he thanked Heaven, looking upon it as a divine inspiration, was a balm to his wounds, a refreshing cordial to his soul ; it dried his tears, coloured his pale cheeks, made the blood circulate more freely in his veins : he welcomed it with that youthful confidence which rarely doubts of success, or to say better, with that lively faith that can remove mountains. It was necessary for him to establish a reputation for bravery, on such a firm and solid foundation that no man could doubt or hesitate to believe well merited ; he would accordingly embrace the military profession, as eminently calculated to furnish opportunities for the display of courage, —he would become a soldier, for he had passed the age for admission to a military college ; besides his ambition was not to become anything great, but to distinguish himself as soon as

possible in the eyes of every one. Much constancy and courage would be necessary, but neither would be wanting; favourable opportunities were also indispensable, but heaven would assist him and create them; for it is above all in God that he places his trust, and his confidence will never be deceived. A light tap at the door of his room now interrupted his reveries.

"May I come in?" asked a soft voice.

He rose to open the door, and Clarita entered, calm and smiling.

"How happy I am to see you at length quite recovered!" said she, remarking the crimson tint that now covered his cheeks; "we will recommence our studies, our evening walks. You cannot imagine what charms these occupations have for me. Let us pass our lives in this manner, Theobald. Why would you marry me so soon, and separate me from you whom I love so dearly? Are we not happy together? It is so sweet to understand each other, to excite each other to virtue, to have but one heart and one mind. As the Peroncellis have given me up, I will not listen to any other proposal of marriage. Is it then necessary for me to marry? How many thousand holy women renounce marriage for the love of God! Can I not live with you as Annunciata did with our father? and when you marry, your wife will be a sister and another friend for me. I will take care of your little children, and I shall be so happy?"

"My dear Clarita," said Theobald, kissing her on the forehead; "let us form no more plans of happiness. God alone disposes of our destiny. Pray for me, and for yourself, too, poor young girl. Pray and hope, let what will happen."

Having said thus much, and fearful of letting his secret escape, he went out of doors. During a whole fortnight the young man considered the best means for carrying out the project he had adopted. With his usual prudence, he maturely weighed all his chances of success, well resolved to neglect none of them, and acting after the wise maxim,—“Help yourself, and Heaven will come to your aid.”—*Aide-toi, et Dieu t'aidera.* He wrote to the Baroness D—, and to his friend the Abbé Duhamel, telling them frankly all that had happened to him since his arrival in Corsica.

Their replies soon followed. Both gave him excellent advice, useful instructions, and several letters of recommendation for different officers serving in the African army. During this fortnight, Theobald was more than usually respectful to his great-grandmother, more tender towards Clarita. He carefully avoided all dispute with his aunt, and did not return to the woods, being fearful of some disagreeable meeting.

We will ask our reader to dwell for a moment on what must have been our hero's feelings during this fortnight. We have endeavoured to show the joy and delight he experienced on returning to his native island, also the excellent sentiments by which he was actuated; we have also seen how very little peace and quiet he was allowed to enjoy in his home, and we shall now see that his prospects in life were completely changed, that he had to forsake his home and family, and all this unhappiness was caused by the hateful passions of a woman acting on a barbarous prejudice peculiar to Corsica. The day before that fixed for his departure, Theobald bid a long and melancholy adieu to the family burial-place, asked the blessing

of old Madame Lonicini at a moment when he was alone with her, embraced his sister and aunt, and rising very early the following morning he found a peasant who agreed to attend him, to bring back his horse.

He then threw himself into the saddle, gave a last lingering look on all he was leaving, perhaps for ever ; sighed deeply as he thought of Clarita's grief at his sudden departure, and then took the high road to Ajaccio, where he waited the passing of the diligence. Clarita, on her return from church, was about to seat herself as usual at work, when she perceived a letter addressed to her, and placed conspicuously on her table. She opened it instantly, the writing being familiar to her. It contained these words :—

“ Happiness, it appears, is not of this world, or we should perhaps purchase it by great sacrifices. I expected to find it in my family and with you, my gentle, excellent sister ; but, as I have been so often told, I had forgotten my country : to remain with you, I must either become criminal or live dishonoured ; both are equally impossible to me. Tell Annunciata she will not see me again until I have proved that the inheritance of the Lonicinis has descended to me intact, and that their ancient and acknowledged bravery has not degenerated in my person. I implore her to watch over you, my dearly-loved sister, as a mother over her cherished daughter, and that she will continue to take charge of the affairs of our house with that devotion and marvellous aptitude she has already shown. As to you, my dearest sister, continue your care of our good old mother, accomplish your noble task, and if my departure causes you to shed tears, seek help at the source of all conso-

lation. There can be no very bitter grief for a mind so pious and so resigned as yours. A day will come, I fondly hope, when we shall both have cause to rejoice in the results of our temporary separation ; but if the hope proves fallacious, and we do not meet again in this world, remember there is an abode of delight and happiness where we shall be reunited for ever,—my dearest sister, we shall meet, in Heaven ! ”

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

CONTRASTS.

LONCINI took the road to Ajaccio, in the hope of finding a ship in the harbour which would take him direct to the coast of Africa, besides he was not sorry to avoid Bastia, and the remarks of Monsieur Cafarelli. He passed two days in the capital of Corsica, which contains a population of only 8,000 inhabitants, and has no commercial resources. He visited the museum, the house in which the great Napoleon was born, and also the fine nursery gardens for which Ajaccio is justly celebrated. He admired the elegance and modern regularity of the buildings, the good taste of the edifices, the parallel streets, and, above all, the magnificent gulf on the borders of which the town is built. Theobald could not immediately find a vessel bound for Algiers, and was therefore obliged to embark in one plying from Ajaccio to Marseilles, and from the latter city he set sail for Africa. Our hero had seen in the "Bastia Journal," some time previously, the promotion of Commandant de Belmont to Lieut.-Colonel of the 49th regiment of the line, actually serving in

Algeria. Our readers will remember that this officer was father of the little boy whom Theobald had saved from drowning, when he fell overboard from the steam-vessel *Le Liamone*; and this circumstance determined his choice. He had no doubt of obtaining the kind interest and protection of Monsieur de Belmont, and his hopes were not deceived. The lieutenant-colonel esteemed himself very happy in being able to serve the preserver of his son, and neglected no opportunity of showing his gratitude. Besides, Theobald, who had brought excellent letters of recommendation to different persons in the regiment, had much to recommend him. He was brave, intelligent, full of ardour and good will, far better instructed than the majority of officers; he possessed, in fact, every possible chance of success and promotion.

Scarcely had he entered on his new career than he felt a decided taste for his profession; but he did not lose his religious principles, and accomplished the duties they imposed without ostentation. The first time his comrades saw him kneel at his devotions, several very unpleasant jokes assailed him; but his piety had already triumphed over too serious perils to be overcome by foolish bantering. He only replied by a disdainful smile, assuring them he would be as faithful to his duties on the field of battle as he was to God in all the actions of his life. And truly he kept his word. In short, his bravery, his obliging temper, his exactitude, soon attracted the friendship of his comrades, as well as the esteem and good will of his chiefs.

During this time, the melancholy Clarita was weeping the loss of her cherished brother. Life

appeared monotonous and disenchanted, now that he was no longer there to impart a charm to her leisure. Still, she would have been less unhappy had she known the fate of Theobald; but the mystery he had maintained in his projects was far more alarming than the revelation would have been. She lost herself in conjectures, being utterly ignorant of the designs and hopes of her brother; and this uncertainty filled her with terror. With what feverish impatience she sighed for another letter from him.

A second letter arrived at last, but it contained little information on the life he was leading, or the plans he had formed for the future. At the same time, other griefs overwhelmed the poor girl. Her old relation breathed her last in blessing her dear Clarita.

Madame Loncini died almost suddenly, without illness of any kind. In fact, she expired like a lamp when the oil is consumed. When the poor child had closed the eyes of her ancestress, and she had been placed with all the customary ceremonies in the family vault, it appeared to Clarita that "her occupation was gone,"—that she had nothing more to do on earth, abandoned as she was by her brother and affianced husband. Her solitary position alarmed her, for she could have no sympathy or companionship with her aunt. On the one hand, Annunciata inspired her niece with more fear than love, with more respect than confidence, although she really loved the young girl in her way. On the other, grief was bowing this haughty being to the earth with its leaden weight. Deceived in her dearest hopes, trembling that one day or other she would see the name of her humbled family altogether extinguished by

the death of her nephew—a stranger to the consolations of religion, and consequently without resignation, without strength from above to enable her to support her trials,—this woman, hitherto so energetic, exhaled her trouble in complaints, in murmurs, in outrageous abuse of the nephew she still loved.

Clarita suffered greatly from this unjust conduct, and, in a timid voice, she endeavoured several times to take her brother's part ; but Annunciata became furious at the least contradiction. Her terrible eyes shot forth lightnings, and her imprecations only became still more vehement. The young girl then resigned herself to suffer this new affliction, and only sought relief in prayer—in offering up for this much-loved brother a thousand more petitions to the throne of grace than Annunciata vomited abuse.

Clarita's tears did not flow long without consolation. The Almighty vouchsafed that peace and hope should re-enter her soul. She consecrated more time to the exercises of piety ; she created new occupations to fill the void that poor Madame Loncini's death and Theobald's departure had made in her existence ; she found amusement in pursuing those studies which she had commenced with her brother ; she redoubled her cares and attentions to old Cati, her pensioner ; and in this life of innocence and good works recovered, if not happiness, at least that peaceful calm of the soul which for a time had forsaken her.

A prey to deep melancholy, Annunciata's beauty faded rapidly. A blue circle surrounded her eyes of fire, and her raven hair was streaked here and there by silver threads ; the energy of her character appeared to abandon her by degrees. She

allowed her old servant to arrogate a kind of authority in the house affairs, which was altogether new; and the flocks of the shepherds browsed the young trees of the enclosures with impunity. A secret design appeared exclusively to occupy her mind. Resolved to accomplish her vow to the Madonna, she went on a pilgrimage to Bastelica, as she had promised on the day of Theobald's absence, and wounded her naked feet with the stones and brambles on the road. This misguided and erring soul knew not that acts of devotion must be accomplished with faith and humility, if we desire that they may be salutary to us, and that God, who gives grace to the humble and repentant, rejects the prayer of the proud.

The bleeding wounded feet of Annunciata were more quickly cured than her heart.

The gentle Clarita became very anxious about her aunt, and, conquering her natural timidity, employed all her wit and grace to amuse and console the poor relative who was suffering from an unknown malady, endeavouring at the same time to inspire her heart with thoughts of piety and love.

Letters came occasionally from Theobald, and brought a little joy to this melancholy abode. He spoke neither of promotion nor success; but it was not difficult to see that he was satisfied with his lot, and, without fixing any positive time for his return, he allowed them to hope his absence would not be so long as he had feared at his departure. Suddenly a most terrible event occurred, which threw consternation and dismay on the Fabiano family, and caused some excitement to the monotonous existence of the Loncinis. Giuseppe Fabiano was found dead in the thicket, his

chest pierced by a ball, and both thighs broken, no doubt in a fall, the result of a jump taken in endeavouring to escape from his murderer. From the report of the medical men, the unfortunate victim must have survived his wounds for two or three days; a trace of blood on the ground showed that he must have dragged himself nearly a quarter of a league from the spot where he met his death-wound, in the vain hope of regaining his house. Every inquiry and search was made, both by the officers of justice and the relatives of the deceased, but the assassin remained undiscovered. Burcica, the bandit, known to be on friendly terms with Annunciata, and formerly with the family, was accused of this crime, but no proof could be found to support the charge; besides he took good care to remain out of sight, and, as hitherto, baffled all the snares laid for him by the gendarmes and voltigeurs. When Annunciata was apprised of this dreadful event, the joy of a hyena shone for a moment in her features, and her face flushed crimson, but almost instantly her usual pallor succeeded, and she cried, with a shudder, "it is not by the hand of a stranger that my brother's assassin should have fallen!"

After this tragic occurrence the temper of this haughty woman became more and more gloomy and stern; her health declined daily; she never left the house, or even her apartment, except to carry powder and shot for the use of Burcica to the "mucchio" of Pepe Loncini; to these she now frequently added food and clothing; indeed, she appeared to have redoubled in care and generosity towards the bandit since the death of Giuseppe Fabiano. Clarita never accompanied her aunt on these occasions; however good and charitable she

really was, this man inspired her with an instinctive repugnance she could not overcome ; all the poor of the village had a share in her charity and assistance ; there was always a supply of *polenta* ready for them, which it was the young girl's delight to distribute herself ; she also succeeded in collecting a few poor girls, and taught them their catechism and needlework. It was no easy task to tame these little savages, accustomed from infancy to a vagabond life, without restraint and nearly without clothing ; but the Almighty blessed the good intentions and the efforts of Clarita, and two or three of these young girls became later virtuous mothers of families and very expert needlewomen. Meanwhile Francisco Peroncelli returned to Vescovato, and learnt with real grief that the projected marriage had been broken off. All that had been said against Theobald he treated as pure calumnies, and implored his father to renew the affair, if it were still possible. Convinced that he had been deceived by false reports, Monsieur Peroncelli yielded to the entreaties of his son, and still more to the clever suggestions of his wife, who, charmed by all she heard of the virtues and popularity of Clarita, earnestly desired to call her daughter-in-law ; but Annunciata disdainfully rejected all the overtures made to her on the subject.

“My niece is not a commodity that can be thrown off and taken up at pleasure,” she proudly replied to the emissary of the Peroncellis ; “ all is at an end between us.”

The young girl herself declared that she would not dispose of her hand during her brother's absence ; besides, her aunt's state of health caused her too much anxiety to be able to think of

herself. Annunciata languished like a palm-tree withered by the scorching blast of the desert; grief and remorse in all probability secretly undermined this proud beauty. Clarita, while lavishing the tenderest cares upon her aunt, endeavoured also to inculcate those sentiments of resignation which rendered her so calm, so happy we may almost say, in her solitary and melancholy existence. But the cold heart remained untouched by the soft persuasions, as well as by the example of her young companion ; so true it is that pride and hate are of all passions those most opposed to the gospel. The life led by Annunciata and Clarita differed in nothing externally from that of other women of their country ; who are all devoted to the superintendence of household affairs, and are perfectly ignorant of the frivolous pleasures which worldly people taste on the continent ; all live in the bosom of their families, each contributing to the general good by their work and economy ; but too few, unhappily, among them, draw from piety those consolations, those lights, which, in directing their purpose to heaven, might render this life of denial and retirement so meritorious in the sight of God, and at the same time so useful in advancing the interests of religion and in softening manners at present so barbarous. Not so with Clarita, she not only scrupulously fulfilled the external duties of religion, but above all was penetrated with that spirit of charity, humility, and resignation to the will of God, which are the essence of Christianity, and she found an indescribable charm in the practice of the duties it imposes, which rendered her strong against temptation and gave her a foretaste in this world of that happiness *which she now only hoped to enjoy in heaven.*

CHAPTER II.

FUNERAL OBSEQUIES.

ONE evening, three years after Theobald's departure, a violent wind, the terrible *libeccio*, was blowing with fury, unroofing the houses and uprooting old oak-trees in the woods, while Clarita was sitting in the midst of her women spinning by the light of a lamp the wool destined to make a warm garment for her old favourite Cati. Annunciata, apart, and listlessly reclining in the large arm-chair, which had been recently occupied by her grandmother, seemed plunged in the deepest melancholy. She was no longer the proud beauty, with fiery passionate mien, with graceful and majestic figure, but a woman worn by devouring grief far more than by age or illness; her features were terribly sharp, and appeared still more prominent, as they were shadowed in profile on the wall painted in fresco; her looks wandered vaguely from the portraits of the Loncini, which hung opposite, to those of Sampiero and Paoli,* the usual ornament of Corsican houses.

"O Heavens," cried Clarita, "how mournfully the wind whistles to-night! How dreadful the sea must be in such weather. I pity the

* The memories of these patriot generals are cherished by all true Corsicans; some account of them will be found in notes appended to the tale, p. 201.

poor sailors exposed to it, and their wives and sisters, who live in constant apprehension of the dangers they incur, but can do nothing to help them. Oh, how I pity them in this tempest!" and the young girl sighed, for she was painfully impressed by thoughts of Theobald. "Who can tell," said she inwardly, "if he be not in danger at this very moment!"

"Listen," said the old servant, "would you not say there are groans outside the house? It must be the lamentations of the souls in purgatory; for people say that in a storm like this they return on earth, to implore the prayers of their relatives and friends who are still in the world."

"Do not believe such things, my good woman," said Clarita, simply; "although nothing is impossible with the Almighty, he does not allow the souls of the departed to return and trouble the repose of the living. Theobald has often told me that all such ideas are nothing but superstitions, from which we cannot too soon free ourselves."

"Good Lord! mademoiselle, did you not see your father's portrait move?" All the servants, and even Clarita, clung together by an involuntary movement.

"The wind from the door caused the frame to move, no doubt," said she; "but let us pray, my good women, pray for both the living and the dead."

She knelt down and recited the litanies of the Blessed Virgin; Annuciata and the servants responding:—*Ora pro nobis.* Just then a furious and sudden gust of wind rushing down the chimney thrust the burning embers from the hearth *into the very middle of the room*, and a violent

knock was heard at the door—all the women trembled.

“For pity’s sake, open the door!” cried a plaintive voice.

“We will not refuse hospitality to any one who suffers, whoever it may be,” said Clarita.

“Certainly not,” said Annuciata, rising at once. “Follow me Lucia.”

The old servant took a lamp that hung on the wall, which flickered and finally went out in her trembling hands. While she was occupied in relighting it, Annuciata went alone to the door, and unlocking it,—

“Be welcome whoever you may be,” said she, “and tell us what you come here for?”

“To die,” replied a smothered voice, that made the sick woman shudder. “He that strikes with the sword, shall die by the sword.”

Clarita, who had taken the lamp herself, could not avoid uttering a cry of terror on recognizing Burcica the bandit, covered with blood, and in a very weak state.

“What has happened to you?” inquired the young girl greatly alarmed.

“I have received a ball in my chest.”

“My niece, help me to place our friend in the stranger’s apartment,” cried Annuciata, who, though pale as the wounded man, nevertheless appeared to have suddenly recovered all her energy.

“Cati, go on with the light, and you, Lucia, run and put clean sheets on the bed.”

“All that trouble will be useless,” murmured the dying man. “For fifteen years I have lain on the bare ground, and I would have died in the same manner; but then I must have quitted life like a dog, without confession, or receiving the

sacraments, and probably have been eaten by the vultures, instead of reposing in consecrated ground. I could not bear the thought, and as I was too far from my native village, I hoped you would receive me, Signora Annunciata."

"You did perfectly right, Burcica; but you will not die. I will send immediately for the surgeon, and I am myself very clever in healing wounds."

The bandit shook his head. "It is too late, believe me. I am not deceived in my condition. Quick! I beseech you—send for the curé of the village."

"Run and fetch him as quickly as possible," said Clarita, to young Cati, the most active of all her domestics; "and, above all, be sure to speak to no one but Monsieur le Curé himself."

Meanwhile Burcica reposed his wounded and aching limbs on the soft bed.

"Let me open your coat and examine your wound," said Annunciata.

"No, no," he replied, "I will preserve the little strength I possess, to speak to the curé—afterwards we will see. Give me something to drink, if you please. Oh! I suffer horribly."

Clarita fetched a glass of wine and water, which the sick man drank off at a draught.

"When were you wounded?" asked Annunciata.

"I can scarcely tell. It was about twelve o'clock in the day, perhaps; but it appears an eternity to me since—those scoundrels of voltigeurs—ah! if I could only meet them once more!"

"Were you wounded by them?"

"Those fellows must be Corsicans to have aimed so exactly. They fired at a hundred

paces, and they did not miss their aim. They are famous marksmen, I must confess."

"And how did you manage, that you did not fall into their hands?" asked Annunciata.

"The grotto of the Fabianos was only ten paces distant," replied Burcica with feverish volubility, "and I succeeded in reaching it, and concealed myself. They passed twenty times over the rock that was my hiding-place, without guessing I was so near them—I heard their footsteps, their conversation, and even their breathing. Oh, Lord! how I suffer. So I must die at last; it is very distressing, very heart-rending. I had formed other projects; in a few months I should have been a free man; Giacomo had promised me his daughter, the little Varina, who is nearly fifteen years old, and who is as pretty as a Venus. I should have married and lived quietly in my village, in the midst of my relations and friends. I should have had little children to love me. Oh! the curé does not come! Oh, pray the Almighty for me, signora; you indeed are responsible for that which weighs most heavily on my conscience."

"Poor Burcica is delirious," said Annunciata, hurriedly to her niece. "Go, child, and look out of the window in my bedroom, and see if by the light of Cati's lantern, you cannot perceive Monsieur le Curé in the street."

Had she anything to say in private to the dying man, or did she fear some indiscreet revelations in the presence of the young girl?

Clarita made no remark, nor did she appear to notice the last words of the dying man; but, after looking in vain up and down the street, she knelt down and implored the Almighty to have com-

passion on the poor sinner, and afford him time for repentance. The priest, who was fetched from the bedside of another dying man, now arrived in all haste, and was instantly conducted to the chamber of Burcica. Annunciata then quitted it; her features were contracted, and her pale and livid lips trembled convulsively. Finding Clarita still on her knees, she knelt beside her, and a few tears of repentance, let us hope, rolled slowly down her sunken cheeks. The surgeon of the village also arrived, but he was obliged to wait more than a quarter of an hour before Burcica had finished his confession. At length the curé opened the door; Annunciata was the first to enter; the dying man addressed a few words to her in a low voice, which appeared to produce a very extraordinary impression upon her, for she tottered and was obliged to lean on the bedstead for support. The surgeon then began to examine the wound. The injury was both wide and deep, but while endeavouring to extract the ball, the sufferer uttered a cry of anguish, let his head fall back, and expired.

“All is over!” said the surgeon, placing the sheet over the head of the corpse.

“No, not all,” said Annunciata, making a violent effort to conceal her emotion. “Burcica was an honourable man—a gentleman. He lived and died as such, and his obsequies shall be worthy of his life and death. Monsieur le Curé, I reckon on your ministry.”

“Burcica died a Christian, and he shall be buried as such, mademoiselle,” replied the priest.

“That is not enough,” pursued she. “Assemble all the clergy, display all the pomps of religion, head the procession with the silver cross, ring the

great bells, as you would for my own brother. Spare no expense—I undertake everything."

" My daughter, if you had any regard for this man, called away so suddenly, pray God for the repose of his soul. That is now the greatest service you can render him. For the rest, it shall be done as you desire."

Day now began to dawn. The surgeon departed, and the *curé*, kneeling by the side of the corpse, recited the service for the dead.

Annunciata's mind was entirely engrossed by other cares. She put out the fire, and closed the doors and windows very carefully, such being the Corsican custom, and then despatched express messengers to Corsica, for the purpose of apprising the relatives and friends of Burcica, and of inviting them to the funeral ceremony.

The body was washed, and dressed in the costume of the Blue Penitents, a brotherhood to which the deceased bandit had formerly belonged. It was then placed on a table covered with a black cloth. Some women of the village received each a small sum of money to fill the office of weepers, and immediately commenced their cries and lamentations.

Clarita had retired to her room, but Annunciata, after having made all necessary arrangements for the company she expected, placed herself in the midst of the women, exciting them by her own tears; and, turning to the corpse, exclaimed,—

" May misfortune befall him who has cut the thread of thy life—may he be hated by God and man!

" May he perish by the hand of a coward, and his blood be unavenged!"

Upon this the women redoubled their cries, and tore their hair.

The parents and friends of Burcica were not long in arriving, and came in successively. The groans and imprecations redoubled on the entrance of each new visitor; but they became almost deafening when the handsome Vanina, the affianced bride of Burcica, entered the room, accompanied by her father and mother.

Annunciata, standing before the coffin, then took up the funeral complaint,—

“Ah! why did you quit this life when you were still in the pride of your age?

“Was not your promised bride all that is beauteous and good?

“Who can we compare to her?

“She would have given you children as lovely as herself, as courageous as their father.

“Oh! why did you leave the world—oh, Burcica?

“The strong man relied on his strength: for a moment he forgot his prudence, and his enemies overwhelmed him. They pierced him with a ball, but from afar, for they would not have dared to confront him! They killed him, and the earth trembled at his fall. The mountain echoes repeated the sound!

“The *libeccio* murmured it in the gloomy valley.

“May all those who contributed to your end perish by fearful deaths!

“May the earth drink their blood.

“May the vultures devour their corpses.

“But thou, oh! Burcica, repose in holy ground. Sleep peacefully in the tomb which your friends are about to prepare for you, and may the Lord receive your soul.”

On concluding this imprecation, Annunciata fell on her knees. The mother of Vanina also poured forth her lamentations, at the same time making a pompous eulogium on him whom she had been so near calling her son-in-law.

The clergy now arrived, and all the company approached the body, and kissed it on the mouth. The procession was formed, and accompanied it to the church and churchyard, where the cries and groans were renewed.

Clarita alone had taken no part in these noisy and exaggerated demonstrations, which were most repugnant to her feelings and the simplicity of her character. She could not understand how cries of vengeance could be mixed with Christian or religious ceremonies; and on her knees at the foot of the cross she prayed,—“Oh, my God, Thou who didst die for the salvation of men, have compassion on this poor soul! Shower down upon it the abundance of Thy mercies, and receive it in Thy everlasting tabernacles! May Thy grace touch and enlighten all those whom a culpable hate leads astray, and cause justice and charity to flourish amongst us.”

While Clarita was thus employed, Annunciata returned home pale and dishevelled. The energy that had supported her in the presence of so many strangers had completely abandoned her now that she was alone, and she fell in a fainting state into the young girl’s arms.

CHAPTER III.

INCIDENTS OF WAR.

AT the very time that Burcica fell under the fire of the Corsican voltigeurs, a far more dramatic scene was passing in the plains of Algeria. A convoy escorted by thirty men only, had been directed towards the Blockhaus de Mered. The commander of this little troop, an experienced officer of the 49th, was proceeding with perfect security through this country so frequently intersected by ravines. This confidence, however, did not appear to be shared by a fine young man close to him, wearing the uniform of Sergeant-Major, and decorated with the cross of the legion of honour, won by numerous acts of bravery. The latter listened anxiously to the slightest ruffle, and his piercing eye was continually directed to the fastnesses of a deep gorge which appeared particularly to have excited his suspicion. All at once, a white form was visible through the deep green foliage of a jujube-tree, and disappeared as rapidly.

“ Lieutenant, the enemy is there,” cried the young man, pointing in the direction of the defile.

“ You are mistaken, Loncini,” replied the officer; “ the Arabs would not be so bold as to attack us close to the gates of Bouffarick.”

He had scarcely pronounced these words, when a ball whistled through the air, and struck him in the breast; the unfortunate man staggered, and fell dead. Our old acquaintance, Loncini, finding himself, by this melancholy event, in command of the troop, immediately gave orders to form a square with the vehicles that composed the convoy, and placed himself, with his men, in the centre of this quickly-made fortification. Scarcely were these arrangements completed, when the Arabs came out in great numbers from the defile that had so long excited his suspicions. They attacked the convoy with inconceivable fury, but the little detachment, encouraged by the example and exhortations of the Sergeant-Major, opposed a most obstinate resistance. Sheltered by the carriages, the French only showed themselves to shower balls on their adversaries, and then instantly retired. Theobald fired unceasingly, and the precision of his aim was such that every shot brought down a man. The Arabs, however, must have triumphed in the end—for their numbers increased every moment,—if the garrison of Bouffarick, hearing the firing, had not sent assistance to this handful of men. At the sight of this unexpected help, the enemy retreated in every direction, and the detachment continued its route. But this day was to be marked by a still more memorable event in Theobald's existence. He had only continued his march about an hour, when, from an eminence, he perceived about forty Bedouins seated on the banks of a rivulet, reposing themselves after the fatigues of the day. Several horses and a great number of cattle, captured from a tribe allied to the French, grazed at liberty by and around them. Nothing

was easier than to avoid meeting them, for they appeared by no means inclined to attack, and the valley they were in was out of the road the detachment had to follow. But in the midst of these men, clothed in their long white bournous, another man, dressed in the uniform of a French officer, was seen evidently bound to a tree, and no doubt beginning to taste the horrors of a frightful captivity. Moved with compassion at the sight of the unfortunate prisoner, and only consulting his courage, Theobald divided his little troop into two parts, leaving a portion to guard the waggons, and then rushing with the remainder on the Arabs, who were greatly astonished at his hardihood. Reassured on seeing the small number of their opponents, the Bedouins seized their arms, and defended themselves for some time bravely, but they were charged with such fury, and lost so many men, that at length they endeavoured to find safety in flight. One of them jumped on his horse, and having hastily untied the bands that bound the captive officer to the tree, galloped off at the extreme swiftness of his courser, dragging the prisoner after him by the help of a long rope made fast to his body. The unfortunate man would soon have been dead, if, quicker than thought, Theobald had not aimed at the fugitive Arab, and fired with such admirable precision, notwithstanding the great distance that separated them, that he stretched him dead on the sand, without touching either the horse or the prisoner. The rest of the Arabs were dispersed over the country. Loncini did not deem it prudent to pursue them.

He reassembled his little troop, and himself ran to the officer whose life he had saved, and

who, too much exhausted to join his deliverers, remained extended on the ground close to the bleeding body of the Bedouin.

"You are free, captain," said he. His soldiers at the same time were occupied in making sure of the cattle abandoned by the enemy.

The officer could not reply. He had fainted. Theobald approached nearer, and lifted up his head, but scarcely had he cast a glance on his face, stained with blood and covered with dust, than a cry of surprise burst from him.

"My God!" exclaimed he in the fulness of his heart, "I will ever bless thee for having granted me the opportunity of exercising the only vengeance worthy of a Christian." He remained in utter astonishment, his heart beating with unspeakable rapture, and then, with superhuman strength, he raised the wounded body of *Pasquale Fabiano* on his shoulders!

As soon as the victorious little troop had reached the Blockhaus de Mered, the young Sergeant-Major, after receiving the congratulations and praises of his superior officers, took his way to the tent where lay "the enemy of his race," whose wounds had been carefully dressed.

He had been placed on one of the baggage wagons, and Theobald had given all the directions that his state required, but had forbidden that any one should speak to him. Our hero had, however, been pointed out as his deliverer.

"How do you feel now, captain?" inquired Theobald, in Corsican, with an emotion no words can convey.

"Why, what is this?" said Fabiano, raising himself on his couch. "Is it possible that my deliverer is also my countryman?"

“ May I add your friend ? ” inquired the Sergeant-Major.

“ Can you for an instant doubt it ? ” cried the captain, offering his hand.

“ You have yet to learn my name,” pursued our hero.

“ Oh, tell it me quickly, that I may teach my children to revere and bless it ! for without you, they would now be orphans, and my dear wife would be languishing in widow’s garments. Tell me, that I may know the name of the man who saved my life at the risk of his own, and to whom I shall ever owe the deepest, most unbounded gratitude.”

“ I am Theobald Loncini, of Piovela,” cried the young man, unable to repress his feelings. There was a pause.

Surprise, admiration, shame, and in all probability remorse, rendered the officer incapable of uttering a word.

“ You are the most noble, the most generous of human beings,” cried he at length, with intense emotion.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPLANATION AND CONCLUSION.

ON a fine spring morning, Annunciata was returning from church, leaning on her niece's arm, and walking with difficulty, being just recovered from a long and dangerous illness.

"My dear aunt, how happy I am to see you not only so much better, but so much calmer and happier than you were last winter. Is it not well to trust to Almighty God, and to resign ourselves to His holy will. Is it not better to shed tears of love and repentance, than to harbour hatred in the heart?"

"Child," replied Annunciata, "all these religious thoughts have come too late; there are faults for which there is no remedy, no consolation."

"Do not say so, my dear aunt: have we not all offended God? But He is good and merciful, he pardons as soon as we truly repent our sins. I have read somewhere that repentance is the sister of innocence."

"How long my nephew delays writing," said Annunciata with a sigh. "If any misfortune happen to him, I shall die of grief, for I alone should be the cause."

"No, no, rest assured," interrupted Clarita;

"I know not how it is, but lately I feel so happy, so joyful, that I feel convinced we shall very soon receive good news of him."

"But why, my child, is he so long in writing? When I think that the last of the Loncinis is at this moment but a private soldier, and exposed to all the risks and chances of war, and through my fault!"

At this instant, the sound of horse's feet were heard at the commencement of the street; the two ladies turned, and in utter amazement exclaimed together,—

"Heavens, it is Loncini himself!"

The young man was soon in their arms, dressed in the handsome uniform of lieutenant, for he had just obtained his promotion, and the cross of honour sparkled on his breast.

"What do I see?" said Annunciata, after the first transports of joy had subsided. "You are an officer; you are decorated; and you did not write to apprise us of your good fortune!"

"My dear aunt," replied her nephew, "had suspected my courage, and I had sworn never to return until I had given sufficient proofs of it to satisfy even her. I have but kept my word."

Tears of joy and pride coursed down the cheeks of the invalid. Clarita strained her brother to her heart. A crowd of people, attracted by curiosity, gathered around them.

"Let us go home," said the officer, "for I see we are making an exhibition."

"My dear nephew, had I been apprised in time of your return, I would have assembled all our friends, that your welcome might have been worthy of you."

As she pronounced these words, a young woman, handsomely dressed, followed by a pretty little boy, about four years of age, and holding an infant in her arms, hastily came out of the Fabianos' house, and rushing through the crowd, fell at Theobald's feet.

"At length I see you, the saviour of my husband, the preserver of my Pasquale," cried she with transport; "you whom we all dreaded as his enemy, you have saved his life at the peril of your own;" and she kissed his hands and bathed them with tears, while Theobald made vain efforts to escape from these marks of gratitude.

"Long life and happiness to Theobald Loncini," cried an old and infirm lady from a window in the same house, waving high an open letter, which proved to be one just received by the Signora Teola Fabiano from her husband, announcing his safety. "Long live Theobald Loncini, for he has saved my son," repeated the old lady.

This cheer was taken up by the entire crowd and repeated several times, the number of people increasing every moment by the arrival of partisans and friends of both houses.

"My friends, I cannot express what I feel," said Theobald in the deepest emotion; and after having thanked his countrymen by sign and voice, and raised the young Madame Fabiano, whom Clarita embraced, this happy family were allowed to enter their home.

The evening that followed this affecting scene, Theobald, placed between his aunt and Clarita, gave them a detailed account of all the events of his military career from the moment of his departure, the difficulties he had to contend with at its commencement, the kindness of the

officers to whom he had been recommended, and the ever-increasing goodwill of Colonel de Belmont, who had really become a second father to him. Divine Providence had not abandoned him for a single moment, removing all obstacles, so as to enable him to gain the desired end, and, in short, raising opportunities and favourable circumstances in which he could distinguish himself, at the same time supporting and consoling him in the midst of fatigues and dangers. The two women listened with delight, looking at him with affection as well as admiration, for his uniform set off his handsome person to much advantage.

“ My gentle Clarita,” said her brother, when his story was ended, “ God is my witness that the fear of injuring your prospects by a reputation of cowardice which I never deserved, far more than any selfish feeling, induced me to embrace a military career. The Almighty has deigned to bless and prosper my intention ; and you, my dear sister, will you not recompense your brother’s devotion by according pardon to a man entirely worthy of your affection, who had no part whatever in the insulting refusal which decided my fate ? I met Francesco Peroncelli as I passed through Bastia on my way home ; I had named him your affianced husband ; his sentiments will never change, and all I can say is that he earnestly desires to bear a dearer title.”

“ My very dear brother, I am very sensible of all you have done for me, and this day more than ever you possess the right to choose my husband ; you have acquired my eternal gratitude, and I am most happy to gratify your wishes on the subject.”

“ I expected such a reply,” replied Theobald, “ and as I have but a short time to stay with you,

I will apprise Monsieur Peroncelli, so that the marriage may take place in a fortnight, which I am sorry to say is the extent of my present furlough."

Clarita passed the two intervening weeks in greater retirement than usual, while Annunciata, whose former activity appeared entirely restored, busied herself in preparing the marriage festivities. The linen which was to form part of Clarita's trousseau, spun by all the cleverest work-women of the village, had long been carefully locked up in large oaken chests. The best shops in Bastia supplied the other articles, and everything was done in very handsome style.

The morning of the happy day having arrived, Francesco Peroncelli, his father, mother, and their numerous friends and relations arrived at Piovela, and presented themselves at the door of the mansion of Loncini, where the bride, her head encircled by a nuptial wreath, and beaming with beauty, modesty, and innocence, received them, supported by her brother and aunt. All the friends and allies of the Loncini family were assembled in great force, dressed in their holiday attire. They left the house in procession with the happy couple, and at the same moment were joined by a large concourse of people, at the head of which appeared the Signora Teola Fabiano in person, her beautiful face radiant with joy, and followed by all her friends and relations, who were determined by this public demonstration to cement their eternal reconciliation with the Loncinis: the latter warmly expressed their gratitude for this proceeding. The partisans of the two families composing nearly all the inhabitants of Piovela and its neighbourhood, Clarita's marriage

became in reality a public rejoicing. All these men, divided and estranged for hundreds of years, embraced fraternally; and it might truly be said that this gentle Clarita, who leant on her brother's arm, covered with a transparent veil, was to all a pledge of peace and happiness. The long procession advanced in silence, for the joy of the Corsican is ever grave and reflective. They first went to the Hotel de Ville, and from thence to the church, which was illuminated and decorated with flowers for the occasion. Francesco and Clarita were then united before God, the good *curé* giving them his benediction, after which the whole company returned to the Loncinis, in the midst of a most deafening discharge of firearms, the only recreation at a Corsican wedding.

On the road home, a number of young girls strewed wheat before the newly-married couple, in sign of prosperity and abundance, others presented them with flowers and honey, as omens of a happy life, and all wished them "good luck and fine boys,"—*buona ventura e figli maschi*; that being the usual felicitation in many parts of Corsica. On their return home, Francisco and Clarita, with all their nearest relations and the old people of the party, took their seats before an immense table, laden with various most delicious fruits, and with many descriptions of confectionery; the rest of the company remained standing, until those that were seated had finished, then advanced and took their places in turn.

The following day each of the guests sent the newly-married lady a large cake of marmalade, or "bruccio;" she received upwards of two hundred, which she distributed herself, with the

remains of the feast, to the poor of Piovela, so that all might share in the wedding festivities. Francisco, who knew how attached Clarita was to her home, had obtained his father's consent for residing for some time at the manor. The only regret that troubled the happiness of these young people was the approaching departure of Theobald; but he promised to pass six months with them very shortly, which greatly diminished their sorrow, and the pain of separation.

At the moment that he was about to depart, after having embraced Clarita and his brother-in-law, the young officer went in search of Annunciata, to bid her farewell, when she advanced to meet him, equipped in travelling costume.

"My nephew," said she, "we will depart together."

He was stupefied, and Francesco, with his sister, exclaimed against her leaving them.

"How have I been so unfortunate as to displease you, my dear aunt?" asked the young girl, raising her tearful eyes imploringly to Annunciata. "Why abandon us? I will ever be a tender and devoted daughter to you. Why quit your native country, and the tomb of your ancestors?"

Annunciata sighed mournfully, as she looked long on the family portraits hanging on the walls; and imprinting a kiss on Clarita's forehead, while she furtively wiped away some tears that stole down her thin cheeks, in spite of all her efforts.

"Listen to me, and do not interrupt me," said she in a solemn tone.

"Nearly two years have elapsed since a human being expired in the thicket, without assistance, without the consolations of religion.

“The murderer of that unfortunate man was but a passive instrument; a woman had directed his arm, marking as it were, on the body of the victim, the very spot where he should receive his death-blow. Nothing had that woman spared to accomplish her revenge: artifices, falsehood, perfidious advice, imprudent measures, everything had been employed to further her ends; but scarcely had she obtained the sole object of her whole existence, when, far from enjoying the gratification she expected, remorse entered her soul and preyed upon her; gnawing little by little, as the worm in the fruit, at length reaching the heart. Remorse tore her with its iron nails, and has left nothing but a living skeleton!

“The victim was Giuseppe Fabiano!—The assassin stands before you!—It was myself!

“Since that fatal day I have languished, without tasting one moment’s peace—not even the guilty pleasure of revenge; for scarcely was the crime consummated, when I thought it pitiful and mean, as a stranger had been the instrument. That, I confess, was my deepest regret. One circumstance, however, brought some consolation to my unceasing anguish. I had long admired in silence the piety and calm of Clarita, though I believed them to proceed from the weakness of her mind. But during the long illness which nearly brought me to the grave, the voice of that dear girl uttered words and exhortations which, thanks to God, reached my heart. It appeared to me that a thick veil fell from before my eyes, and that I saw everything in a different light—under a new aspect. The charms of sincere piety caused me to comprehend all the horror, all the enormity, of my crime. Theobald’s generosity

and its happy results have caused me sincerely to repent!"

"Well, then, my dear aunt, we will weep together over what is past," said Clarita, who had not listened to these terrible revelations without shuddering.

"Child," said the latter, in a mingled tone of disdain and tenderness, "do you think that living happily with you, in the daily enjoyment of your happy home, in a country where now the name of my family is extolled to the skies, can prove a penance worthy of Annunciata and the God who calls her to Him? No, no. Innocence and happiness are your portion, my sweet and pure Clarita; for me—repentance and the austeries of a cloister."

"My dear, dear aunt, reflect, I implore you, before you decide," cried her niece, shedding abundant tears.

"Nothing can alter my decision."

"Where do you wish me to conduct you?" asked Theobald, kissing Annunciata's hand, for he knew too well the inflexibility of her character to believe that anything would alter her resolution.

"To the convent of the Lady Capucines at Marseilles," replied his aunt. "Let us depart at once."

The following day Mademoiselle Loncini was seated on the deck of the steam-vessel, and lost sight one by one of the different landmarks on the shores of her much-loved country, which she was leaving for the first and last time. She watched with intense anxiety until the whole island appeared no more than a distant spot in the midst of the vast ocean. At the moment she was about

to lose sight of it for ever, Annunciata rose suddenly, stretched her arms in despair towards the beloved land which was disappearing from her view, and exclaimed, while tears flowed down her cheeks,—

“ Adieu, land of my race, country of my ancestors, cradle of my infancy! Adieu, tomb of my forefathers! Adieu to all I love! Adieu to all for ever! ”

Four-and-twenty hours later the gates of the convent closed upon her for life.

Theobald continued his way to Paris, where his regiment was in garrison.

It was then, and at that precise time, just after he had left his aunt at the convent of the Lady Capucines, that the Baroness D—— and myself had the pleasure of meeting him again. He was a fine and most accomplished young man, as well as an excellent officer. He related to us the eventful story which I have the pleasure of offering to the perusal of my young friends.

We listened with the most lively interest, and when he had concluded, gave thanks to the Almighty, who sends trials to the just, only to render them still more deserving, and who frequently rewards, even on earth, those virtues which He crowns with everlasting glory in a better world.

THE END.

N O T E S.

NOTE I.—*Page 7.*

Madame de D—. It appears that this lady is a real character, whose modesty, the authoress observes, would be offended by the disclosure of her name.

NOTE II., p. 11.

Brando as well as *Pietra-Nera* are picturesque villages on the coast of Capo Corso, a few miles north of Bastia, the road being a favourite promenade of the Bastese. The fugitives, taking by-paths through the mountains, must be supposed to have wandered out of the direct road from Furiani to Bastia ; Furiani lying to the south of that place. In general, the features of the country, as well as the characteristics and customs of the people, are faithfully delineated in the tale.

NOTE III., p. 12.

Laments, “*lamento*.”—A taste for poetry is common throughout the island ; the songs of the shepherds and mountaineers being generally of a plaintive cast.

NOTE IV., p. 20.

Maquis, the Corsican *Macchia* :—a natural shrubbery, of exquisite beauty, consisting of arbutus, tree-heaths, alaternus, daphne, lentiscus, blended with myrtles, cystus, and other aromatic shrubs, and forming the unique picture in Corsican and also in Sardinian scenery.

NOTE V., p. 21.

Furiani stands on a hill about two leagues from Bastia, to the right of the highroad to Corte, forming a picturesque object, with its ivy-mantled towers, rising among trees. Here the Corsicans first proclaimed their independence of the Genoese, and it was the scene of their last struggle against the French.

NOTE VI., p. 25.

La Balagne, a fertile district in the arrondissement of Calvi, famous for its olives. The Nebbio is a fine basin, with beautiful valleys, lying to the south-west of Bastia. Capo Corso includes the long mountain-chain extending from that town to the northern extremity of the island, with its narrow but fertile valleys. The inhabitants are industrious and thriving.

NOTE VII., p. 25.

Bastia to Ajaccio.—This great national road extends beyond Ajaccio to Bonifacio at the south extremity of the island. The Corsicans are apt to affirm that its construction was the only benefit conferred on them by their compatriot Napoleon Bonaparte.

NOTE VIII., p. 29.

Corsican regeneration.—See remarks in the Preface.

NOTE IX., p. 32.

The *Pelone*,—a cloak of coarse woolen cloth, of a dark colour, of native manufacture, with a hood, is invariably worn in the interior.

NOTE X., p. 32.

The *pointed cap* (*berretta pinsuta*) is now rarely worn, except by the mountaineers.

NOTE XI., p. 34.

Beyond the mountains.—Corsica was anciently divided into two provinces, the *di qua*, and the *di là, dei monti*; the former including the present arrondissements of Bastia, Corte, and Calvi, the latter those of Ajaccio and Sartène.

NOTE XII., p. 34.

Bastiaccio, a term of contempt applied by the mountaineers to the Bastese, or inhabitants of Bastia, the termination *accio* conveying the insult.

NOTE XIII., p. 34.

An old song, “*ballata*.”—Many of these canzone composed by the rude mountaineers are recitals of traditions, in which the national heroes and most celebrated bandits figure. Some are *satires on the French*. See also note III.

NOTE XV., p. 35.

Polenta.—Cakes made of chesnut-meal, and eaten instead of bread. The chesnut woods in Corsica are very extensive, and supply the principal diet of the shepherds and a great number of the poorer population. Chesnups are also made into puddings, and cooked in a variety of other ways.

NOTE XVI., p. 38.

The *Mezzaro*, worn as a veil by ladies of condition, resembles the Spanish mantilla. Women of the lower class shroud their heads in the fold of an upper petticoat drawn over the shoulders. It is called the *faletto*.

NOTE XVII., p. 55.

The war of independence caused a succession of struggles for many centuries to throw off the Genoese yoke. That alluded to in the text was the final contest for nationality against the French, in which the Paoli family distinguished themselves.

NOTE XVIII., p. 58.

Pin-Parasol.—Only two species of the pine grow in Corsica; the *pinus maritima*, probably here meant, and well known to all travellers in Italy for its umbrella-shaped head, and the *pinus laricio*.

NOTE XIX., p. 63.

Notre Dame-de-la-Garde, a chapel, as most travellers know, stands on a rocky summit above the port of Marseilles, where mariners pay their vows and suspend their votive-offerings.

NOTE XX., p. 69.

Libeccio, a south-west wind, the *mistral* of Provence, which at Capo Corso, the Straits of Bonifacio, and other parts of Corsica, is so violent that the trees are bent.

NOTE XXI., p. 75.

Pinus-Laricio.—This is the largest of the two species of pine indigenous in Corsica.—(See note XVIII.) They grow to upwards of 120 feet high, with a circumference of 9 feet. Perhaps it was not so much the resinous odour of the pines which Theodore breathed off shore, as the perfume of the aromatic shrubs composing the *macchia*—(see note IV.)—with which the slopes

of the mountains are overspread. It was of this perfume that Napoleon spoke in a conversation at St. Helena:—“*La Corse*,” he said, “avait mille charmes; tout y était meilleur, jusqu'à l'odeur du sol même. Elle lui eût suffi pour la deviner, les yeux fermés. Il ne l'avait retrouvée nulle part.”

NOTE XXII., p. 83

Seneca's Tower.—A picturesque ruin, crowning a pinnacle of rock, visible in passing along the coast, has received the name of *Il Torre di Seneca*. The philosopher spent seven years of exile in Corsica by order of Tiberius, but it is most probable that he resided in one of the Roman colonies on the eastern coast.

NOTE XXIII., p. 83.

Towers.—In the beginning of the eighteenth century there were eighty-five of these watch-towers in the circuit of the island. Many of these are now demolished.

NOTE XXIV., p. 85. (See also p. 31.)

Monte Christo.—This island, with Elba and Pianosa, form a striking group, as seen from the sea or the coast of Capo Corso, on the one hand, and Capraia stands out boldly on the other. Monte Christo has lent its name and furnished a remarkable scene to the well-known romance of Alexandre Dumas. The little island, nine miles in circumference, is now the property of, and colonized by, an English gentleman.

NOTE XXV., p. 88.

Chapel of the Madonna della Vesina.—This chapel, near Pietra Nera, between Bastia and Brando, celebrated for its sanctity, is a place of pilgrimage and of much resort.

NOTE XXVI., p. 98.

Mucchio (misprinted Macchio).—In some parts of Corsica, the peasants cast a stone or a bough of a tree on the spot where any one has perished by a violent death. The heap thus raised is called the *Mucchio* of the deceased.

NOTE XXVII., p. 98.

King Theodore.—In 1736, on the invitation of Gaffori and other Corsican patriots, Theodore Baron de Neuhoff, in West-

phalia, a man of talent and enterprise, and of a commanding person, who had been page to the Duchess of Orleans, and afterwards served in Spain, was proclaimed King of Corsica. Having landed at Aleria with military stores, and, vaunting of his resources and his influence at powerful courts, and engaging to drive the Genoese out of the island, he was received with acclamation, and assumed every attribute of royalty. He had his court, his guards, levied troops, coined money (as we find in this Tale), instituted an order of knighthood, and created a nobility. For a while success attended him, and he became master of nearly the whole island, except the Genoese fortresses, which he blockaded. These were, in fact, the keys of the island. Soon, however, the promised succours failing to arrive, and his new subjects beginning to cool in their allegiance, he departed to the continent, in the hope of obtaining means to carry on the war. He returned after a while with a fresh armament, having found means to raise a considerable loan. But it was too late ; the Genoese had then ceded their strong places to the French ; the patriot leaders were negotiating with them, and the people had lost all confidence in their mock king. Theodore found that "the game was up :" and, wisely retracing his steps, found his way to England, the last refuge of abdicated monarchs. Fortune still frowned on him. Pursued by his creditors, the ex-king was thrown into the King's Bench Prison ; from whence he was released as an insolvent debtor, and, dying soon afterwards, was buried in the churchyard of St. Anne's, Soho. Horace Walpole, who had raised a subscription for the unfortunate adventurer, placed a mural tablet, surmounted by a regal coronet, over his grave, and wrote the well-known epitaph. He died in 1756.

NOTE XXVIII., p. 102.

Without arms.—Till within the last six years, no one in Corsica, of whatever degree, went abroad unarmed ; such was the general insecurity from the spirit of *vendetta* or *banditisme* pervading the people. A general disarmament was decreed in 1855, and so rigorously executed, that none were excepted ; not even a license to carry a fowling-piece for shooting game could be procured. This general disarmament, combined with other decided measures, mentioned in the Preface, proved effectual in putting an end to the reign of terror and blood which had desolated the island for so many centuries.

NOTE XXIX., p. 107.

The *broccio* is an excellent cheese made of goat or ewe's milk. It bears nearly the same name in the dialect of Provence ; the French call it *recuite* ; it is only made in the south of Europe.

NOTE XXX., p. 108.

Caporellis (a misprint for *Caporali*)—a name of office, the caporali having been the chiefs of the communes in the popular struggles against the feudal aristocracy.

NOTE XXXI., p. 127.

Padulella.—In Corsica, the little port attached to each of the towns or villages on the coast, which for safety or health were built on neighbouring hills, is called a *Marino*. Such is that of Padulella. There is a great want of harbours on this eastern coast of Corsica ; while the west coast boasts such fine havens as those of San Fiorenzo, Issola Rossa, and Ajaccio.

NOTE XXXI., p. 128.

Mortuary chapel.—Many Corsican families have their private burial-places, with little mortuary chapels, in various styles of architecture, on their own grounds, on the sides of the hills, or on the sea-shore. Surrounded with groves, or distinguished by groups of the funereal cypress, these buildings have often a striking effect in the landscape.

NOTE XXXII., p. 128.

Funeral repasts.—These feasts are still retained in many parts of Corsica. [As to funereal laments, see afterwards note XXXVII.]

NOTE XXXIII., p. 142.

Stain of blood.—“Mothers of families, whose husbands have been assassinated, preserve the dress of the deceased until their children grow up to manhood, and then show them the clothes tinged with the blood of their fathers, and exhort them to vengeance ; and in disputes with others, the latter taunt them”—the *rimbecco* of p. 90 of this Tale—“if they have not revenged themselves. Thus these unhappy children have no other alternative than to live dishonoured, or to destroy the murderers of their parents ; and they rush headlong into crime.”—*Benson's Sketches of Corsica*.

NOTE XXXIV., pp. 149 and 167.

Notre Dame de Bastelica.—This sanctuary is situated in one of the wildest regions of Corsica, among the mountains at the head of the Gulf of Ajaccio. The barefooted pilgrim had to

traverse forests, cross deep rivers, and even climb the great central chain by almost impracticable passes, in her toilsome journey of 60 or 70 miles to the shrine of the Madonna, under the old oaks and chesnuts of Bastelica.

NOTE XXXV., p. 171.

Sampiero was born at Bastelica in 1501. Nurtured in its wilds among the bold and hardy mountaineers, that "man of iron" became pre-eminent among the noble band of heroes who fought for the independence of Corsica. The shepherds of these mountains still religiously preserve his traditions. Having served with distinction in the Italian levy under Francis I. and Henry II. of France, Sampiero returned to Corsica, and assuming the command of the patriots, drove the Genoese out of the principal places in the island, which he ruled for three years. The murder of his wife, Vanina d'Ornano, the heiress of one of the most illustrious families in Corsica, left a deep stain upon Sampiero's reputation; the more so, as she fell a victim to his hatred of the Genoese, when on her way to solicit a pardon he spurned from the Senate. Retribution overtook the implacable Corsican, who was assassinated by his own lieutenant at the instigation of the Genoese.

NOTE XXXVI., p. 171.

Paoli.—Pasquale Paoli, born at Rostino on the 25th April, 1725, was educated at Naples, where he shared the exile of his father, Giacinto Paoli, one of the leaders of the Corsicans in their great struggle against the Genoese. Recalled to Corsica in 1755, he joined his brother Clemente, a singular character, half monk, half soldier, and with him annihilated the power of the Genoese in the island, becoming its constitutional chief. Genoa having ceded her rights to France, he resisted for some time that more formidable Power, but was at length forced to take refuge in England, where, being well received, he resided from 1769 to 1789. Then the French revolution opened the way for his return to Corsica, the affairs of which, as a French department, he administered, till, disgusted at the excesses of the French revolution, he again asserted the independence of Corsica, and ultimately calling in the assistance of the English, drove out the French. Corsica was then united to the crown of England; but jealousies arising, the English withdrew in 1796. Pasquale Paoli again became an exile, residing in London till his death, on the 25th February, 1807. He lies buried under a tomb in the churchyard of Old St. Pancras, and there is also a mural monument to the memory of the Corsican hero in Westminster Abbey.

NOTE XXXVII., p. 179.

Imprecation, *read* Improvisation.—“The Corsicans” remarks Mr. Benson, “are great improvisatori, and I learnt that the verses recited by women at their funerals, although produced without premeditation, are frequently so expressive of sorrow, as to affect in a great degree the bystanders.”—(*Sketches of Corsica.*) They are common also to the neighbouring island of Sardinia, and of such a character in cases of violent death as to stir up the passions to a bloody-vendetta. The funeral lamentations of the women, a custom alluded to in Scripture, form one of the many primitive usages alleged in proof of the Phoenician origin of the early colonists of these islands.

NOTE XXXVIII., p. 190.

Buona ventura e figli maschi. “Luck and a boy,” is also the nuptial toast in some parts of the north of England.

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